

CULTURAL BRANDING IN PRACTICE

How to identify ideological opportunities for web design

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**CULTURAL BRANDING IN PRACTICE: HOW TO IDENTIFY IDEOLOGICAL
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ABSTRACT

The web has become a mainstream communication tool used by companies, institutions, celebrities, and politicians to establish, reinforce, or repurpose their brand, almost bypassing more conventional branding media. Traditional branding models offer little help in directing how companies should build culturally relevant brands. Cultural branding is a discipline that aims to solve this challenge by pinpointing ideological opportunities emerging in society and building brand strategies which leverage these opportunities. The literature on the practical process of implementing the strategy is very limited, especially regarding the implementation of the strategy to digital channels. The research on cultural meanings of semiotics of digital user interfaces is also insufficient.

This thesis discusses how to identify ideological opportunities to develop a cultural branding strategy. The literature section reviews how brands function according to cultural branding and what are the main differences in comparison to traditional definitions of brand. The production section examines what we can learn from (1) using a combination of Zaltman metaphor elicitation technique (ZMET) and Kelly's repertory grid technique to interview consumers, and (2) from using Barthes' ideas of meaning as a framework to analyze interviews to identify ideological opportunities for web design. Out of commonly known consumer research methods, the ZMET results in one of the most in-depth understandings of consumers' unarticulated, latent needs which are required to understand cultural needs. Kelly's

Keywords: cultural branding, branding, mythology, web design, ideology, ZMET, Kelly's Repertory Grid, Roland Barthes

repertory grid technique enables to assess the relation of these needs to myths that existing branded websites convey. Barthes' ideas as an analysis framework enables to distinct interviewees' responses to brands, the cultural contradictions they experience, and the underlying ideologies from the values, emotions, and attitudes more widely shared within a society. The use and the results of using this methodology are reviewed with a test case of designing a brand concept and a website for USchool, a minor targeted for Master's degree students in Aalto University.

The contributions of this thesis are two-fold: a review of definitions of brand and bridging cultural branding theory and practice through a web design case. The exemplified combination of methods and process is a systematic way to understand cultural expressions of websites, how they contradict with consumers' identity projects, and towards what kind of ideologies consumers are gravitating instead as an alternative. The main contributions offered by the review of this thesis are (1) a comparison of cultural branding against traditional branding based on academic literature, (2) the discussion of how brands emerge and (3) how social networks function around brands according to cultural branding in comparison to traditional definitions of a brand. This thesis fills gaps in research by studying (1) definitions of brand, (2) means for implementing cultural branding strategy, and (3) means for studying the cultural and mythological meaning of websites.

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1. INTRODUCTION

According to Garzotto et al. (Oct 16, 2010), the web has become a mainstream communication tool used by companies, institutions, celebrities, and politicians to establish, reinforce, or repurpose their brand, almost bypassing more conventional branding media. Due to the raising of social media, the cultural relevance of brands has become even more important (Holt, 2016). Holt (2010) argues that traditional branding models offer little help in directing how companies should build culturally relevant brands. Cultural branding is a discipline that aims to solve this challenge by pinpointing ideological opportunities emerging in society and building brand strategies which leverage these opportunities (Holt, 2016).

Holt (2012) claims that traditional, psychology-driven brands do not work. According to him, brands should convey a powerful myth to become iconic. He claims that all iconic brands enjoy the characteristics of strong brands described by the conventional models; they generate buzz, create deep emotional attachments with consumers and have distinctive and favorable associations, but these are the consequence of successful myth-making, not the cause. Holt (2004) argues that iconic brands function like cultural activists by encouraging people to think differently about themselves. The most powerful iconic brands are prescient and address the leading edges of cultural change (Holt, 2016).

On 2010 Holt and Cameron published their Cultural Branding Strategy model (D. Holt & Cameron, 2010) to help brands reach this ambitious goal. The cultural branding strategy divides the process of identifying emerging cultural opportunities and leveraging them to build iconic brands into a 6 stage process model. The theory of this process and cultural branding is widely introduced in the literature, but the practical implementation of the process is hardly exemplified, not to mention the implementation of the strategy to digital channels. According to Islam (2013), the research on cultural meanings of semiotics of digital user interfaces is also very limited.

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This thesis aims to discuss how to identify ideological opportunities to develop a cultural branding strategy. To answer to this question, **the two research questions of this thesis are:**

1. *What we can learn from (1) using a combination of Zaltman metaphor elicitation technique (ZMET) and Kelly's repertory grid technique to interview consumers, and (2) from using Barthes' ideas of meaning as a framework to analyze interviews to identify ideological opportunities for web design*
2. *How a brand is defined and how brands function according to cultural branding compared to traditional definitions of branding*

Each stage of the Cultural branding strategy aims to result in one type of understanding that is required to build a cultural branding strategy (Holt & Cameron 2010). Out of 6 total stages of the process, this thesis discusses in more detail how to execute the following first three stages of the model and how to get understanding of the corresponding information:

1. *Map cultural orthodoxy - What are the conventional cultural expressions used by most competitors? A cultural expression consists of ideology, myth and cultural codes.*
2. *Identify social disruption - What shifts are there that disrupt consumers' identification with the conventional expressions? What changes are there that lead consumers to desire a new ideology or make them feel uncomfortable with the existing ones?*
3. *Locate ideological opportunity - How do these disruptions impact the category customers? What is the emerging cultural desire for new cultural expression? What kind of ideologies do consumers gravitate towards as an alternative, that a new brand strategy could leverage?*

As mentioned above, the theory of this model is widely introduced, but the process of practical implementation is hardly discussed, and even less the implementation of the model to digital channels. To fill this gap in research, this thesis examines what we can learn from using:

- *Zaltman metaphor elicitation technique (ZMET) to identify holistic, cultural consumer needs and the underlying ideologies consumers desire.*
- *Kelly's repertory grid technique to understand the cultural expression websites convey to consumers, how this cultural orthodoxy contradicts with consumers' identity needs, and which underlying social disruptions cause this.*
- *Barthes' ideas of meaning as a framework to analyze interview material, to identify myths and ideologies brands express to consumers and to distinguish the consumer's intersubjective response to these from the values, emotions, and attitudes shared broadly within society.*

This set of methods could enable designers and branding practitioners to create culturally relevant websites systematically.

This study began with a literature review analysing how a brand is defined and how brands function according to cultural branding compared to traditional definitions of branding. The aim was to compare how the two different definitions of brands answer the following questions:

- *What is the goal of branding?*
- *Where does a brand's value reside?*
- *Where and how a brand emerges?*
- *Which drivers guide the development of a brand?*
- *What is a brand's value to customers?*
- *What types of connections do customers have with a brand?*
- *What is the target audience of brand expressions?*
- *What s the role of communications, products, and services in the creation of brand experience?*
- *What is the customers' role in interaction with a brand?*
- *What is the role of a brand in interaction between the customers and their interests?*
- *For what purposes are the models the most suitable?*

1.2 HOW I CHOSE TO APPROACH THE CHALLENGE

In order to compare the cultural branding definitions of brand to traditional definitions, I went through most of Holt's (2016; 2004; 2012) and additionally Holt's and Cameron's (2010) publications about cultural branding. As my main literature on the traditional definitions, I used a review on the topic by de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley (1998) and additionally a review on the history of branding by Bastos and Levy (2012).

In 2004 Holt claimed that during his extensive research in branding, he was unable to find a single example, in which conventional consumer research contributed to the building of an iconic brand due to their focus on the product category. According to him great myths require understanding of the most acute desires and anxieties of existing and prospective customers. It is critical to unveil their most significant identity projects, existential issues beyond product category, and the contradictions related to these (Holt, 2004).

To overcome this challenge I decided to use Zaltman metaphor elicitation technique (ZMET). According to Van Kleef, van Trijp and Luning (2005) out of commonly known consumer research methods ZMET interview and empathic design methods are appropriate for the development of new products. They are both need driven and focus on understanding consumer problems and motivations (van Kleef et al., 2005). Van Kleef et al. (2005) argue that these methods focus on latent, unarticulated consumer needs and provide detailed insight into what really drives consumer behavior. According to them, this information is highly actionable for marketing purposes but requires additional methods to be translated into product designs.

Ideological opportunities originate from a demand of new ideologies or if the current brand myths do not resolve the current social disruptions (Holt 2010). To understand the connection between the identity needs identified with the ZMET and the myths that branded websites convey I combined the ZMET with a modified version of Kelly's repertory grid technique.

Kelly's repertory grid technique enables to unveil the content and hierarchical structure of subjective meanings consumers attach to multiple products, in the form of bipolar constructs (van Kleef et al., 2005). The aim of using the modified version of Kelly's repertory grid technique together with ZMET was to unveil the contents of myths and ideologies a set of competitor websites conveyed and how the unveiled consumer needs were associated, not associated or contradicting with them. The bipolar construct resulted in an understanding of whether the cultural expression of the websites was in line with the consumers' demand for ideologies or what ideologies the consumers preferred instead and what was the cultural contradiction that caused this.

The methods were selected based on their suitability for the purpose based on the systematic review of consumer research methods for development of new products by Kleef, Trijp and Luning (2004).

Cultural brands break through when they address an acute contradiction in society with the right ideology, which is dramatized through the right myth and expressed with the right cultural codes (Holt, 2012). According to Holt (2010), the values consumers associate with brands are only a consequence of powerful mythmaking, not the cause. To understand the myths and ideologies instead of only the values which consumers experience, I decided to use Barthes' widely shared ideas of meaning (Fiske & Hartley, 2005) as a framework for the interview analysis. The framework enabled to understand the distinction between the target group's response to cultural codes, myths and the ideologies they favored from the values, emotions, and attitudes shared more widely within a culture.

The methods are discussed in more detail below in the methodology section.

1.3 CASE USCHOOL

The use and the results of using this methodology were examined with a test case of designing a brand concept and a website for Uschool which is a minor masters program of Aalto University.

The School of Science and the School of Art and Design of Aalto University with the University of Helsinki jointly offer a subject on usability, user-centered design, and human-computer interaction, called Uschool. Uschool gives the students expertise in user-centered design, usability and user interfaces. The Uschool program has existed since 1998. However, in recent years, there has been, and in the future, there will be changes which require the Uschool brand identity and its website to be renewed, not to mention the outdated aesthetics of the old site. In the recent years, there have also been financial cuts to the university budgets and the importance of marketing of the programs has been raised in order to preserve the program's priority and desirability within the university. Previously Finnish universities have also been free of charge to non-European students but not anymore in the future. Therefore the importance of branding university programs may rise as the programs no longer differentiate themselves from the competitors with being free.

In the process, four students from the Collaborative and Industrial design MA program of Aalto University were interviewed by following the Zaltman metaphor elicitation technique (Christensen & Olson, 2002; Gerald Zaltman, 1997) and Kelly's repertory grid technique (Sampson, 1972). The Uschool website, three websites of competitor programs and one website of a similar program from abroad were selected for the study.

The first task of the interview was to discuss the emotions, thoughts or aspirations the participants had regarding their studies and career by following the ZMET process to understand their identity needs. Next, the participants were asked to tell how each of the identity needs were associated or contradicted with each of the websites and what myths and ideologies they perceived the websites to convey that resulted in this reaction.

The interviews were analyzed by transcribing them and coding the material by using Barthes' three levels of meaning as a framework. By using the framework, discussions of the tangible contents of the websites were coded to one category, which represented the denotative level of meaning. The discussions of values, emotions, and attitudes were coded to their own category, which represented the second level of meaning. The interviewees' intersubjective responses to websites, meaning myths and ideologies were coded to another category, which represented the third level of meaning.

1.4 THE STRUCTURE OF THIS THESIS

First, in the theoretical background section, the definition of brand according to cultural branding will be discussed and compared to traditional definitions of a brand. Second, in the theoretical section, the cultural branding strategy model will be discussed to lay a theoretical basis for the methodology and the case example. The methodology section will discuss the methods, tools and data collection for identifying ideological opportunities for cultural brand development. The case example will review the process of using this methodology with a test case of identifying ideological opportunities for the Uschool brand concept development. The results of the empirical research of the case example will be discussed in the results section. The benefits, limitations, and contributions of the research and the methodology testing will be reviewed in the discussion section. Also, the discussion section proposes a set of questions for future work to answer and the ethical considerations related to utilizing ideological needs for the benefits of brand development. The research questions will be answered in the conclusions. Finally, the further concepting process and the resulting website will be reviewed briefly after the conclusions.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This section reviews the definitions of brand, how brands function according to cultural branding strategy and introduces the basic theory of cultural branding strategy model. First, to emphasize the difference of the definition of a brand by cultural branding in contrast to definitions by traditional models, the differences between the two will be discussed below.

2.1 DEFINITIONS OF BRAND

This thesis discusses cultural branding as an alternative approach to branding. Traditional branding models offer little help in directing how companies should build culturally relevant brands (Holt 2012). Cultural branding is a discipline that aims to solve this challenge by pinpointing ideological opportunities emerging in society and building brand strategies which leverage these opportunities (Holt 2016). However, it seems that the cultural branding strategy is not well known even to the practitioners of branding. Hence, in this chapter, the construct of brands according to Holt's cultural branding theory (Holt Douglas, 2016; D. Holt & Cameron, 2010; Holt, 2004; Holt, 2012) will be discussed in contrast to the traditional view on branding. The comparison is done based on the systematic review of the traditional definitions by de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley (1998).

The instances of branding can be found to be attached for example to food, places, people, military, schools, and religion (Bastos & Levy, 2012). Individuals use brands to create their identities and to communicate it to others to manage the impressions they form (Heather Schulz & Patricia Stout, 2011). Brands are used to express nationality (Lily Dong & Kelly Tian, 2009), to associate ourselves with those we desire to be associated with and to disassociate from those whom we do not want to be associated with (Katherine White & Darren W. Dahl, 2007). According to Aggarwal and McGill (2011), consumers attribute human traits, emotions and intentions to brands and their behavior is influenced due to this relationship. The Apple logo makes people behave more creatively, and the Disney brand can make one more honest (Gráinne M. Fitzsimons, Tanya L. Chartrand, & Gavan J. Fitzsimons, 2008). We associate brands with personality traits like sincere or exciting and judge their acts based on their personality (Pankaj Aggarwal & Ann L McGill, 2011). Brand relationships can develop in children as young as seven years old (Lan Nguyen Chaplin & Deborah Roedder John, 2005).

Brands clearly have a role in our society but what exactly do we mean when say "brand"? It is visible from the historical inspections that the term has had multiple meanings (Bastos & Levy, 2012; de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998). Over the years the term has lacked a conventional definition among academics as well as practitioners (de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998).

The first definitions of brand as to apply a trademark, or to promote a product or service by a brand name or design are from the year 1909. The term has been used with the same meaning still in 1994 (Brand, v. 1.). In the 1950s Gardner and Levy introduced the concept of brand image, which caused a sensation in the business world (As cited in Bastos & Levy, 2012) They claimed that consumers buy products besides for what they do, also for what they mean. Recent research in consumer culture theory has focused on the role of brand as an instrument in the interpretation of social interactions (de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998; Heather Schulz & Patricia Stout, 2011). De Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley (1998) identified the "personality" definition and two-way "relationship" definitions to be repeatedly mentioned in the academic literature about branding originating from 1980's and 1990's. According to Holt (2004), with the rise of the internet, the viral branding strategy became popular, which proposes that consumers—not marketers—create identity value.

In cultural branding, a brand is defined as a performer of, and a container for an identity myth (Holt 2004). Holt (2004) argues that it is not that brands would not create associations and emotional attachments, build relationships and also buzz as the viral branding strategy promotes. According to him, these are, however, the consequence of successful mythmaking, not the cause. "The identity myth embedded in the brand leads customers to associate the product with category benefits, to spread the myth by word of mouth, to emote, and to gather together. Hence, while these measures serve as useful metrics for appraising identity value, they offer little strategic help in directing how companies should build iconic brands" (Holt, 2004, p. 60). The closer details and the differences between the traditional models and the definition of cultural branding will be discussed below.

THE GOAL OF BRANDING

Cultural icons serve as society's foundational anchors of meaning by being continually referenced in entertainment, journalism, politics, and advertising (Holt, 2004). Holt (2004) argues that they act as exemplary symbols that people accept as shorthand to represent essential ideas. The Oxford English Dictionary defines an icon “as a person or a thing regarded as a representative symbol, esp. of a culture or movement; a person, institution, etc., considered worthy of admiration or respect.” (Icon, n. draft additions. 2001).

Many of the traditional definitions propose that for a brand to be successful, it needs to promote a consistent brand concept over time to build a strong brand image (de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998, Bastos & Levy 2012). Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley (1998), claim the strength of brand image based definitions is that by balancing between brand image and brand identity managers should be able to avoid being over-reliant on consumer views on how the brand should develop, or restricting the brands' evolution.

Holt (2004) argues that stressing on consistency over time, however, leads brands to focus on getting rid of the messiness of the society and history in search of its purified essence. According to him, this approach disables identity brands because it denies the brand's role as a historical actor and fails to recognize that identity value is created and transformed in a particular historical context.

In cultural branding, the aim is to promote a myth that addresses an acute contradiction in society (Holt 2004). Holt (2004) argues that brands can become iconic by performing a particular identity myth society especially needs at a given historical moment, a myth that addresses cultural anxieties. According to him, these brands act as the consensus expressions of the values held dear by some members of the society, much like cultural icons. Holt (2004) argues that iconic brands become desirable as a result of a few masterful performances rather than consistent communications.

WHERE A BRAND'S VALUE RESIDES

Both, the definition, by Levy in 1955 (as cited in Bastos & Levy, 2012) and the definition by Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley (1998) define a brand as values consumers associate with a brand. (Bastos & Levy, 2012; de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998).

According to Holt (2004), such a strategy can be useful for low-involvement brands like deodorant brands as it simplifies the decision making for the consumer by distilling the product to a few key benefits. According to him, this leads the managers to simplify the brands so dramatically that they treat the brand's most critical asset, the details, as strategically irrelevant. Although Levy already in 1955 (as cited in Bastos & Levy, 2012) argued that consumers buy products for their meaning, it seems based on Holts arguments that it is the further practical application of these ideas that fail to result in meaningful associations. Holt (2004) argues that the identity value of brands exists in the details and therefore they are the brand's most critical asset and because of this, simplifying a brand into a few abstract concepts will never lead to building an iconic brand. To create identity value a firm needs to detail the brand's involvement in cultural and societal transformation and the particular cultural expressions the brand uses to achieve this (Holt, 2004).

WHERE AND HOW A BRAND EMERGES

Many definitions seem to propose that a brand emerges as a result of managers augmenting products and services with values which then the consumers associate with products and services (de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998). Holt (2004) argues that a brand emerges as various “authors” tell stories that involve the brand. According to him the four primary types of authors are companies, the culture industries, intermediaries such as critics and retail salespeople, and customers, especially when they form communities.

The brand stories have plots and characters, and they rely heavily on metaphors to communicate and to spur our imaginations (Holt, 2004). Holt (2004) explains that these stories collide in everyday social life and form conventions and a brand emerges when these collective understandings become firmly established and are treated as truths. According to him, it is the collective nature of these perceptions which makes a brand powerful. These stories become conventional and are continually reinforced because they are treated as truths in everyday interactions (Holt, 2004).

WHICH DRIVERS GUIDE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A BRAND

Most brands in pursuit of cultural relevance chase after trends, which leads hundreds of companies with the same generic list of trends to do the same thing with little cultural relevance in the end (Holt, 2016). Besides trends and a brand identity, traditional definitions (de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998) seem to suggest that consumer research should guide the development of brand associations. However, according to Holt (2004), this type of research does not offer a holistic understanding of consumers' identity needs, anxieties, and desires which is required to build an iconic brand.

In cultural branding people are viewed holistically, seeking to understand what gives their lives meaning, rather than as customers of category benefits (Holt, 2004). Holt (2004) explains that cultural knowledge seeks to understand the identity value of mass culture texts, rather than treating mass culture simply as trends and entertainment like brand managers who are driven by traditional definitions of brand.

According to Holt (2004), to systematically build iconic brands, companies must assemble cultural knowledge rather than knowledge about individual customers. He argues that cultural branding examines the role of major social categories of class, gender and ethnicity in identity construction rather than sorting people into psychographic groups. However, later in 2016 in his article "Branding in the age of social media," he argues that brands should target crowd cultures by which he means subcultures and art worlds.

Brands rarely develop their myths from scratch but instead in a parasitic manner perform myth by promoting associated stories crafted by other authors (Holt, 2004). Holt (2004) argues that brands cannot compete with films, politicians or musicians. However, these figures provide material for the brand to connect with the myth and load it to its products and services.

BRAND'S VALUE TO CUSTOMERS

According to traditional definitions, the value of a brand for customers is, for instance, help in making decisions by rapidly recognizable associations or by reducing risk by a brand acting as contract ensuring quality. Brands may create value by promoting consumers' values, with psychological human values concerning brand personality, with relationships or by added value of some sort (de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998). Some traditional definitions also promote that brands can offer value for customers by being fashionable or cool (Holt, 2004).

Consumers use brands to construct their identities (Heather Schulz & Patricia Stout, 2011). According to Holt, traditional branding definitions ignore how consumers use brands to buttress their identity. Iconic brands carry a heavy symbolic load for their most enthusiastic consumers (Holt, 2004). Holt (2004) argues that iconic brands function like cultural activists by encouraging people to think differently about themselves. According to him, most powerful iconic brands address the leading edges of cultural change and help people to reconsider the accepted ideas about themselves. As mentioned above, instead of consistency, the value of a myth of an iconic brand does not emerge from the myth itself but its alignment with society's identity desires (Holt, 2004).

TYPES OF CONNECTIONS CUSTOMERS HAVE WITH A BRAND

According to Holt (2004), the practitioners of some of the traditional branding strategies stretch the brand associations to intrigue wider audiences. According to him, iconic brands function differently. The communities of iconic brands have three different types of stakeholder groups which he calls "constituencies": followers, insiders, and feeders (Holt, 2004). According to Holt (2004), the loyalty of iconic brands is determined in large part by the relationship between these constituencies and is, in fact, a product of this social network.

He argues that the most effective way to expand the market power of an identity brand is to enhance the devotion of followers by performing myths that feed their desires. By followers, Holt (2004) means the customers who form the nucleus of the brand's customer base, who identify strongly with the identity brand's myth and use it to cope with the desires and anxieties they

experience in their everyday lives. According to him, these consumers find the highest value in the brand's myth and are the most devoted to the brand because it provides the myth and acts as their moral compass. The more the myth gains devotion from the followers the more customers in total the brand will attract (Holt, 2004).

According to Holt (2004, p. 171) "Insiders are the gatekeepers to the brand's claims on the populist world." They create myth experiences for themselves through the extraordinary dedication to the topic of the myth, but they hold the myth in less esteem than the followers (Holt, 2004). "Insiders either inhabit the populist world or at least hang out on its periphery" (Holt, 2004, p. 171). Holt (2004) explains that examples of insiders are for instance outlaw bikers for Harley Davidson or for Apple the cyberpunks and commercial art technicians who rely on Apple for their creative career.

Feeders as the name suggest, feed of the experiences of followers and of the identity value the brand delivers to followers to construct an identity for themselves (Holt, 2004). Holt (2004) argues that the devotion of the followers and the credibility the insiders admit for the brand create an identity magnet that sustains feeders (see figure X). According to him, the feeders want to belong to the community around the myth and use the brand to do so.

There is research on how consumers associate themselves with the one's they want to be associated with and vice versa. Still, based on de Chernatony's and Dall'Olmo Riley's review (1998) traditional brand definitions seem to have an emphasis on the one to one connection between the brand and a single consumer. Iconic brands' customers according to Holt (2004) are on the other hand loyal because they do not have only one-to-one relationships with the brand (Holt, 2004). According to Holt (2004), much of the brand value is created by other stakeholders in the community. He argues that because of this interconnectedness the customers of iconic brands are loyal as they are locked into this social network. Once a brand appears as a credible performer of a myth to a critical mass of insiders, followers, and feeders, individual customers find it very difficult to walk away from the brand to competitive offerings, as they lose the social effect of this network (Holt, 2004). Holt (2004) explains that because of this, to move away from an iconic brand is a collective decision which happens by one of two ways: (1) a critical mass of followers walking away from the brand due to an irrelevant myth, or (2) a critical mass of insiders rallying against the brand because of the brand acting against their populist world.

ROLE OF COMMUNICATIONS, PRODUCTS, AND SERVICES IN THE CREATION OF BRAND EXPERIENCE

Some of the traditional branding models seem to propose that the purpose of advertising is to influence consumer perceptions about the quality, benefits, personality and other traits of the brand (de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998). According to Holt (2004), the belief is that the communications content is only instrument of persuasion, which consumers discard once they persuasion has been achieved.

Holt (2004) argues that conversely, in cultural branding the communications are the center of the customer value and products and services are a conduit to experience brand stories. Brands' value resides in its cultural expression, the particular cultural contents of the myth and the expression of these in the communications (Holt, 2004). According to Holt (2004, 2012), the expression can be found from all marketing activities from product design, retail, communications, packaging, and service scripts to CEO speeches (Holt 2012). According to him, buying the products which are loaded with the myth enables consumers to do a ritual action and experience the myth on a tangible level, unlike an occasional get-together or fan poster.

CUSTOMERS' ROLE IN INTERACTION WITH A BRAND

It seems that according to the traditional definitions of brand (Bastos & Levy, 2012; de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998), the role of the customer is to perceive brand associations and benefits discussed above, to be in interaction with the brand, to build a relationship or spread the word of mouth.

In cultural branding, the customer role consists of personalizing the brand myth to fit individual biography (Holt, 2004). However, as discussed above, according to Holt (2004), in cultural branding the product and services are a conduit to experience the brand stories. Hence, the customer role includes also experiencing the myth with a ritual action of using a product or service, instead of only through perceived communications (Holt, 2004).

THE ROLE OF A BRAND IN INTERACTION BETWEEN THE CUSTOMERS AND THEIR INTERESTS

Holt (2016) argues that due to the rise of social media-powered crowd cultures and amplified subcultures, the cultural relevance of brands has become even more crucial. Brands used to be intermediaries between the consumer and their interests but the rise of social media has enabled consumers to act directly with their interests (Holt, 2016). Holt argues that as a consequence branded content appears only as spam in this interaction (Holt, 2016). Hence, brands should target and get involved in crowd cultures which are both creators and consumers of modern myths (Holt, 2016). According to Holt (2016), with cultural branding companies can engage in cultural discourse as proselytizers and remain culturally relevant instead of being only intermediaries and perceived as spam.

THE MOST SUITABLE PURPOSES

According to Holt (2004), traditional definitions can be useful for low-involvement brands like deodorant brands as they simplify the decision making for the consumer by distilling the product to a few key benefits. According to him relationship strategies on the other hand suit services, retailers and specialty goods.

Cultural branding applies particularly to categories in which people tend to value products as a means of self-expression but also to other entities that people rely upon to express their identity (Holt, 2004). Holt (2004) argues that lessons from cultural branding may be applied to any market offering that people use regularly or idealize as means to improve their life. However, most brands require hybrid strategies according to him.

TOPIC	TRADITIONAL DEFINITIONS OF BRAND	CULTURAL BRANDING
<i>Definition of brand</i>	A value system, an image in a consumer's mind, personality, identity system, communication unit, logo etc.	Performer of, and container for an identity myth.
<i>The goal of branding</i>	Consistent expression of values.	Performing a myth that addresses an acute contradiction in society.
<i>Where a brand's value resides</i>	Abstract values	Detailed cultural expression
<i>Where and how a brand emerges</i>	From managers augmenting products and services with values.	Being treated as truth within a social network of stakeholders such as companies, consumers and media.
<i>Which drivers guide the development of a brand</i>	Needs of individual customers within the limitations of category benefits and trends.	Holistic, cultural needs of masses, subcultures, media and the brand itself
<i>Which drivers guide the development of a brand</i>	Needs of individual customers within the limitations of category benefits and trends.	Holistic, cultural needs of masses, subcultures, media and the brand itself
<i>Brand's value to customers</i>	Simplifies decisions, reduces risk, matches with consumer values, relationship, being fashionable or cool.	Buttresses identity.
<i>Types of connections customers have with a brand</i>	Emphasis on one to one connection.	No one to one - only through a social network.
<i>Target audience of brand expressions</i>	Wider audience	The most active followers of the brand
<i>Role of communications, products, and services in the creation of brand experience</i>	Communications are used to change consumer perceptions of products and services by persuasion. Communications are discarded once the persuasion has been achieved.	Communications are the center of customer value. Use of products and services acts as a ritual action to experience the brand's myth and as a conduit to experience brand stories.
<i>Customers' role in interaction with a brand</i>	Perceiving benefits & associations, interaction with brand, building a personal relationship, word of mouth etc.	Personalizing the brands myth to fit individual biography. Ritual action to experience the myth when using a product or service.
<i>Role of a brand in interaction between the customers and their interests</i>	Mediator	Engaged in a cultural discourse as proselytizer for consumer values.
<i>The most suitable purposes</i>	Functional, low-involvement categories, complicated products. Relationship definitions suitable for services, retailers or specialty goods.	Identity categories, market offerings that are used regularly or idealized to improve one's life.

Table 1:Summary of the differences between the traditional definitions of brand and cultural branding definition

2.2 CULTURAL BRANDING STRATEGY

In cultural branding, the aim is to identify emerging ideological contradictions and to leverage these to build iconic brands. To help companies reach this ambitious goal Cameron & Holt (2010) developed the cultural branding strategy model. The model consists of 6 stages: (1) Map the category's cultural orthodoxy, (2) Identify the social disruption, (3) unearth ideological opportunity, and (4) Cull appropriate source material, (5) apply cultural tactics, and (6) craft cultural strategy (Cameron & Holt, 2010). However, due to space limitation, this thesis will focus on the first three stages of the process, meaning, how to locate ideological opportunities that a cultural brand strategy can leverage to create an iconic brand.

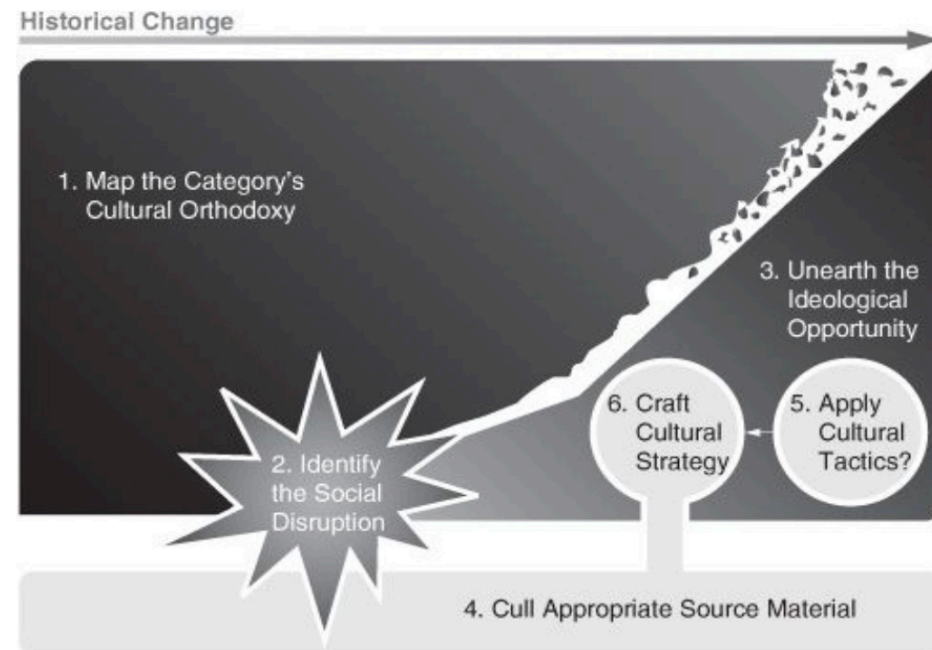


Figure 1: The Six-Stage Cultural Branding Strategy Model (Holt, 2012, p.11)

STAGE 1 - MAP THE CATEGORY'S CULTURAL ORTHODOXY

To locate an ideological opportunity, “cultural orthodoxies” must be identified (Holt, 2010). Holt (2012) defines cultural orthodoxy as the cultural expressions that are taken-for-granted within a category and which most competitors promote. In the case of recent university design program branding in Finland, multidisciplinary could be a clear example. Categories that seem like red oceans from the perspective of conventional branding strategies are often blue oceans for cultural innovation (Holt, 2012).

Cultural orthodoxy consists of ideology, myth and cultural codes used by most competitors (Holt & Cameron, 2012). According to Holt (2012), orthodoxy can be found in all marketing activities from product design, retail, communications, packaging, and service scripts to CEO speeches. In the exemplified case of this thesis the cultural codes, ideologies, and myths were mapped on competitor web pages.

STAGE 2 - IDENTIFY THE SOCIAL DISRUPTION

According to Holt (2004), the national ideology is often the most strong root of consumer demand for myth, though it competes and intersects with other group identities. The national ideology is a system of ideas, values of what is right and just, societies definition of success and respect, which people pursue due to their moral imperatives (Holt, 2004). According to Holt (2004) citizens of a nation do not by default inhabit its ideology but many people pursue these ideals and have troubles seeing how their lives match up with them. He argues that this tension between group identities such as the nation's ideals and individual's personal experience results in desires and anxieties. According to him this distance, meaning social disruption, creates a demand for symbolic resolutions, ideologies and myths that manage the distance between the two.

STAGE 3 - UNEARTH THE IDEOLOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES

Especially during cultural shifts, these desires and anxieties create an opportunity to build identity value by direct engagement in the center of cultural change, by revisioning the brand to perform a myth that answers to the current cultural contradiction (Holt, 2012). However, as discussed above, according to Holt (2004), many of the practical applications of traditional branding strategies ignore the opportunities of cultural shifts because of their excessive focus on preserving the brand image the same over time.

The distance between people's identity projects and national ideologies causes tension, which leads people to look for new cultural expressions, myths, and ideologies (Holt, 2004). These needs offer opportunities which brands can leverage with the right ideology, dramatized through the right myth with the right cultural codes. (Holt, 2016). Ideological opportunities arise during significant cultural shifts which shake up the cultural conventions of the category (Holt, 2012). At any historical moment, there is a myriad of these changes taking place (Cameron & Holt, 2010). The goal of this phase is to investigate how the social disruption impacts the customers and what kind of ideologies consumers demand as an alternative (Holt & Cameron, 2010).

STAGES 4, 5 AND 6 - DESIGN CULTURAL INNOVATION

After understanding which ideological opportunities exist, the task is to understand which cultural codes to use to associate the brand with an appealing myth and to install these elements into offering across the marketing mix (Holt, 2012). Transforming the myth source material into designing a concept that responds to the right ideological opportunity in an original and compelling way is the creative part of the process (Holt, 2012). In their book "Cultural Strategy: Using Innovative Ideologies to Build Breakthrough Brands" Holt and Cameron (2010) suggest using specific cultural tactics to craft a cultural strategy in the fifth stage of the process. The sixth stage's task is to craft a cultural strategy. According to Holt and Cameron (2010), compared to traditional brand strategy documentation, cultural strategy demands more detailed and directive specifications of myth, ideology, and cultural codes (Holt & Cameron, 2010). Due to space limitations, the last three stages will not be discussed in much detail in this thesis.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this part, the methodology for locating ideological opportunities will be discussed. The section will explain the theory and standard procedure of using ZMET, Kelly's repertory grid and the theory of Barthes's ideas of semiotics. The methods and the criteria for recruiting the respondents and the website for the test case will also be discussed below.

3.1 INTERVIEW METHODS

ZMET

Usually in a ZMET interview participants are asked to choose at least eight photographs or other visual images taken from magazines, catalogs, or photo albums that represent their feelings on the research topic (van Kleef et al., 2005). According to van Kleef et al. (2005), participants should be given several days to reflect on the research topic before they will be interviewed. During the interview, participants are for instance encouraged to tell stories about all of the images they chose and the connections among them, but the procedure may vary (van Kleef et al., 2005).

Much of our mental models reside below consciousness (Gerald Zaltman, 1997). According to Zaltman (1997), pictures used in the ZMET serve as effective entry points for exploring customer's concepts. The ZMET enables more in-depth understanding of consumer thinking because our thoughts are largely image based, much of the communication is nonverbal, and metaphors are central to human thought and elicit hidden knowledge (Gerald Zaltman, 1997).

KELLY'S REPERTORY GRID TECHNIQUE

Kelly's repertory grid method consists of personal interviews with consumers to elicit the content and hierarchical structure of the subjective meanings in the form of bipolar constructs that they attach to multiple products (van Kleef et al., 2005). The task consists of "triading," which involves randomly selected three products and asking the participant to describe in a short phrase or sentence how the two of them are alike and different from the third (van Kleef et al., 2005).

According to van Kleef et al. (2005), the technique primarily reveals product characteristics. Sampson (1972) argued that there is a danger of ending up with superficial, primarily physical or functional rather than psychological responses. To overcome this challenge the in-depth discussion of the ZMET was used as the basis for the discussion as an aim to keep the discussion over this task on the same level of depth.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION

RESPONDENTS

The interviewees were five students of Aalto University's Collaborative and Industrial Design master's degree program who were interested in studying user experience design. Hence, the participants were part of the same subculture and have similar ideas which vary from those of a broader culture (Subculture, n. 2.2017). The participants were selected by choosing respondents who planned to invest their time in studying the topic as a part of their university studies. Hence, they probably identified themselves quite strongly with related ideologies and myths but did not yet act as insiders. Hence the sample of the interviewees consisted of potential followers of the brand. According to Holt (2004), targeting the most eager followers of the brand is the most efficient way of increasing the market power of the brand.

To get access to the participants of the subculture, one of the interviewees was first identified, and the other students with similar interests were selected with a snowballing sampling process (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). As noted by Biernacki and Waldorf (1981), one of the challenges of snowball sampling is to verify the eligibility of potential respondents. Also in this case, only in the interview situation, one of the interviewees pointed out not belonging to the targeted subculture and hence was left out of the sample, resulting the final sample to include four respondents. Zaltman (1997, p. 432) notes that "at most, data from four or five participants are generally required to generate all of the constructs on the consensus map."

Due to scope limitations of the project, the sample included respondents from only one targeted program. The program was also targeted for students of cognitive science programs of the University of Helsinki and computer science students of the Department of Science of Aalto University. The brand of the Uschool program had difficulties only with reaching enough students from the Collaborative and Industrial design program, while they got a sufficient amount of applicants from the other two programs. Designing and performing a myth for a wider variety of target groups is outside of the scope of this study.

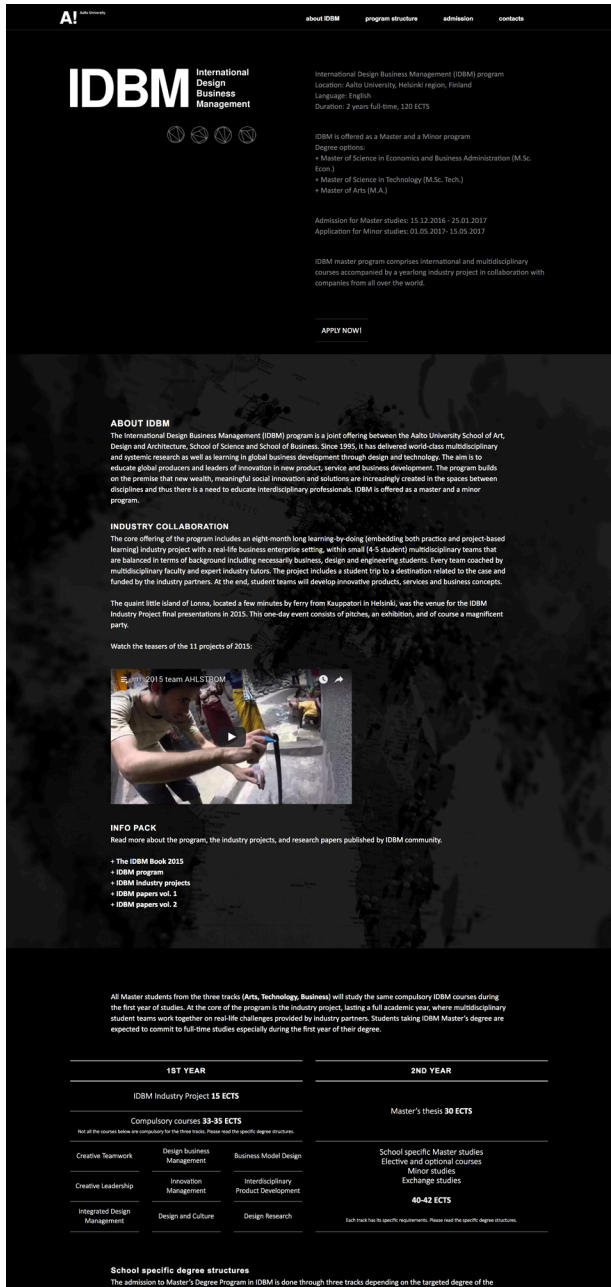


Figure 2: IDBM Website

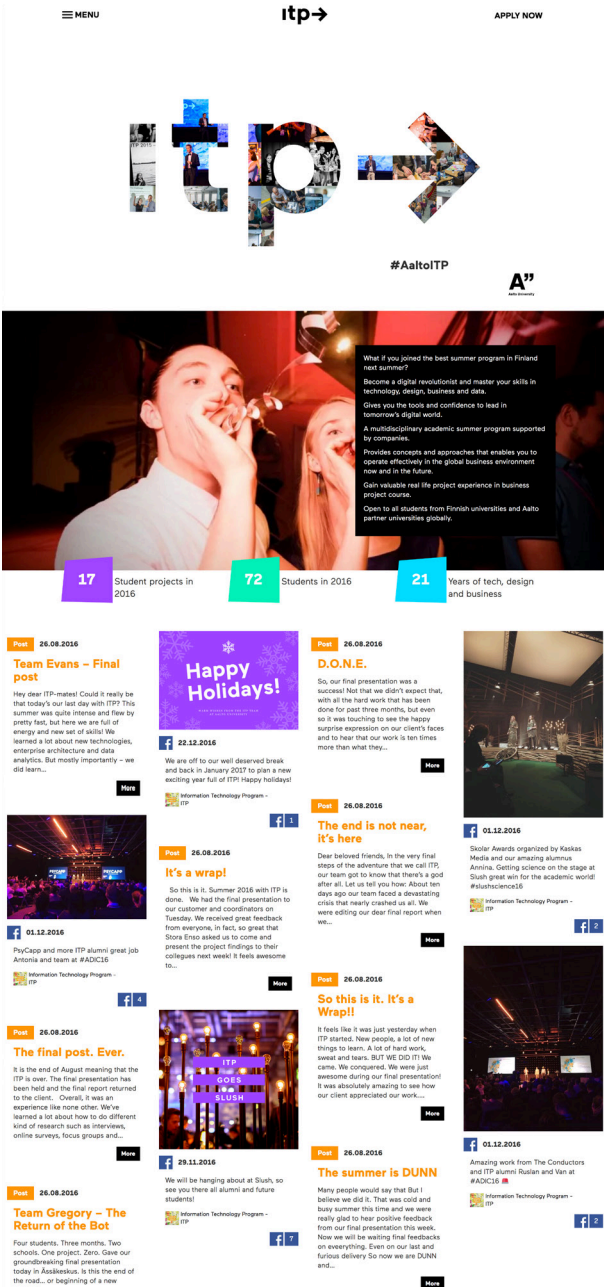


Figure 3: ITP Website

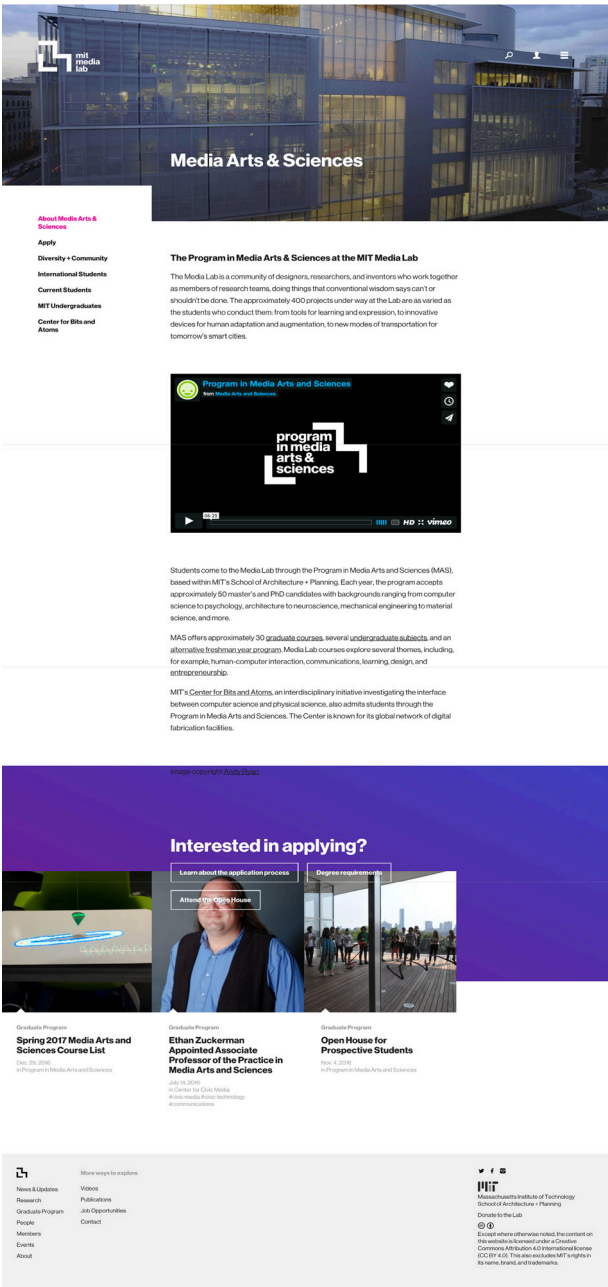


Figure 4: MIT website



Figure 5: ASM website

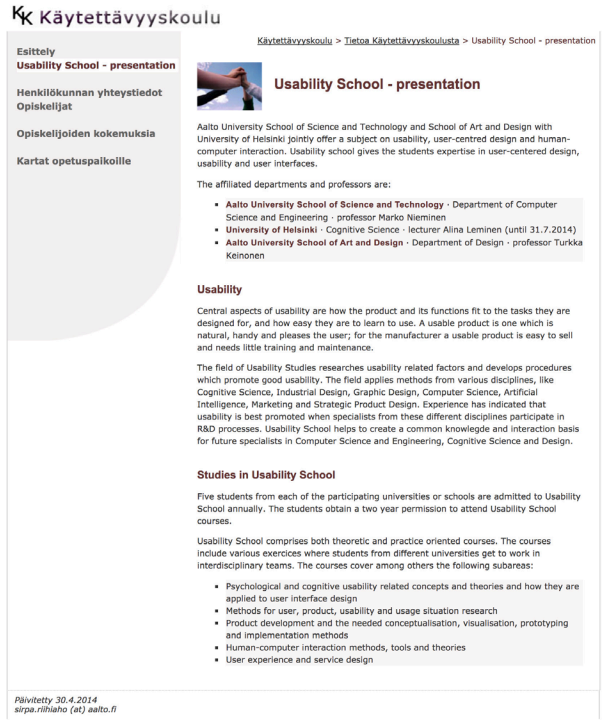


Figure 6: Old USchool website

WEBSITES

The study program websites in the interview were used to trigger associations in the participants' minds to understand which brand myths and ideologies the cultural expression of the current websites communicate and how these associations matched with the interviewees' identity desires and demands for new ideologies and myths. Instead of other mediums, websites were selected for the analysis because they were the primary communication channel of the programs and the goal of the project was to design a website.

The study program website sample included websites of the three closest competitor minor programs: ITP (Information Technology Program), ASM (Aalto Service Minor) and IDBM (International Design Business Management). Besides the competitor websites, the sample also included the website of the MIT Media Lab to understand better the cultural expressions the minor programs within Aalto university had in common.

As the fifth website, the Uschool website was also included to understand how the participants responded to the current website. This was needed to understand the current cultural and political authority (Holt, 2004) of the brand. Iconic brands develop reputations for telling a certain kind of story (Holt, 2004). Holt (2004) argues that by authoring a myth that people find valuable a brand earns cultural authority to tell similar kind of myths to address (with political authority) the identity desires of similar constituencies in the future. Holt (2004) claims that brands have two complementary assets: cultural authority and political authority. It is critical to understand what kind of political and cultural authority a brand has in order to understand which identity desires are appropriate for a brand to address (Holt, 2004).

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

In order to break down the cultural expression and interview discussion, Barthes' ideas of meaning were used as a framework. The framework enables to distinct the mythologies and ideologies from the emotions, values, and attitudes shared within a broader society and to understand the relation of both of these levels of meaning to their tangible representations.

BASIC CONCEPT OF SAUSSURE'S PARADIGM

Barthes' ideas of the meaning of semiotics are based on Saussure's paradigm of semiotics. Saussure's paradigm of semiotics incorporates a two-component model of signification made up of the signifier and the signified which together form a sign (Saussure & Harris, 1983). Saussure & Harris (1983) explain that both, the signifier and the sign are psychological concepts. For example a visual image of a tree (signifier) results a meaning (signified) "tree" (arbor in latin), which together form sign (Saussure & Harris, 1983).

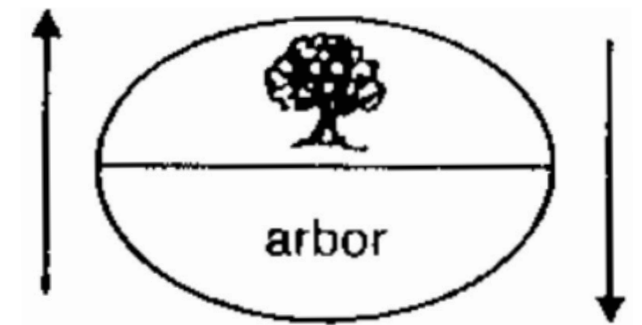


Figure 7: A saussurean model of semiotics with an instance of visual sign "tree". (Saussure & Harris, 1983, p.67).

BARTHES' IDEAS OF THREE LEVELS OF MEANING

Barthes divides the meaning of semiotic signs into three levels of meaning or “semiotic orders” in semiotic terminology: denotative, connotative and mythological (Fiske & Hartley, 2005).

In the first, “denotative” order, the meaning of a picture of a car is car (Fiske & Hartley, 2005).

In the second order of signification, the simple meaning of the first order meets cultural meanings which derive from the way a society uses and values the sign’s meaning (Fiske & Hartley, 2005). In this order, signs signify values, emotions, and attitudes (Fiske & Hartley, 2005). A car may, in this case, for instance, signify virility or freedom. For the sign of a car to trigger the myth of virility and freedom, it must be robbed from a specific signified (i.e. mental image) (Fiske & Hartley, 2005), e.g., from the 1960’s Pontiac car advertisement. In this level of meaning the sign activates our mental “myth-chain” (Fiske & Hartley, 2005) by which we understand for example the car culture of the 1960’s from where the ideas of emotions, values, and attitudes derive.

In the third order of signification, the second order meanings cohere into a comprehensive cultural picture of the word, a coherent and organized view of the reality with which we are faced (Fiske & Hartley, 2005). In this order of signification, an image of a car, can, for instance, form a part of a mental image of an industrial, materialist and rootless society. In the third order of signification an individual’s response to a signifier is subjective (Fiske & Hartley, 2005). According to Fiske and Hartley (2005) the signs, however, mean what they do only through an intersubjective agreement between the members of a culture. They explain that cultural membership is expressed through intersubjectivity and is one of the ways a culture influences an individual. The function of myths in the third order of signification is to organize themselves into coherence which can be called mythology (Fiske & Hartley, 2005). The mythologies reflect the broad principles culture organizes and interprets the reality of which it has to cope (Fiske & Hartley, 2005).



Figure 8: Pontiac car advertisement from 1964 (Pontiac baby blue.1964)

4. CASE STUDY

This section will discuss the practical process of using the previously introduced methodology to locate ideological opportunities. The methods were tested with a case of designing a brand concept for the Uschool minor program of Aalto University. Although often presented as a linear process, crafting all the six stages to build a cultural strategy is not a straightforward process but requires going back-and-forth between the stages and making ongoing comparisons to rule out alternatives and further refine the strategy (Holt & Cameron, 2010). However, this iterative development is beyond the scope of this thesis and is discussed only briefly in the case continuation section.

4.1 PROCESS

The process followed the cultural branding strategy model by Holt and Cameron (2010). As mentioned above, due to the space limitations of this thesis the case example covers only the first three stages of the process of mapping cultural orthodoxy, identifying social disruption and locating ideological opportunities. See the further explanation of the theory of the model in the theoretical background section above.

Before the interviews, I did a semiotic analysis of the websites selected for the interviews. After the semiotic analysis, I recruited the participants, conducted the interviews, transcribed them and conducted a content analysis of the transcriptions.

4.2 SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

The semiotic analysis was done to distinct my personal opinions from the interviewees' opinions, and to be able to contrast the results of the methodology to results of some other commonly used methodology. The semiotic analysis was done with the same contents of the same websites as the interviews and by using the same framework to ensure comparability of the results. I have personally studied in the same program as the target group students which may result in my analysis of the meanings to be biased to some extent. Therefore, it was good to understand later if my interview analysis conclusions were similar to the results of the semiotic analysis. The results of the semiotic analysis are visible and compared to the results of the interviews in the summary of the result section.

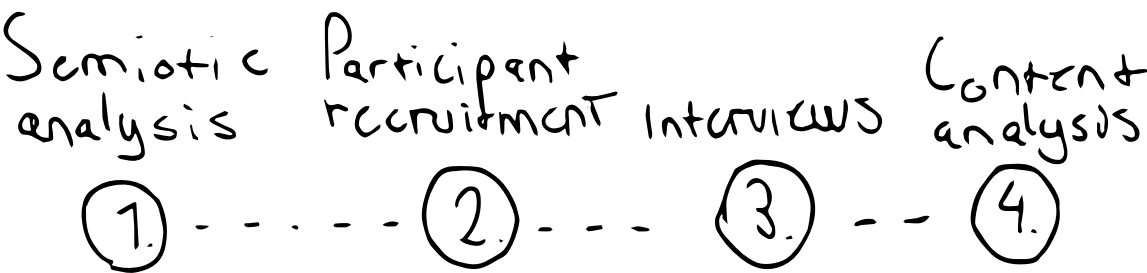


Figure 9: Research process

4.3 CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS

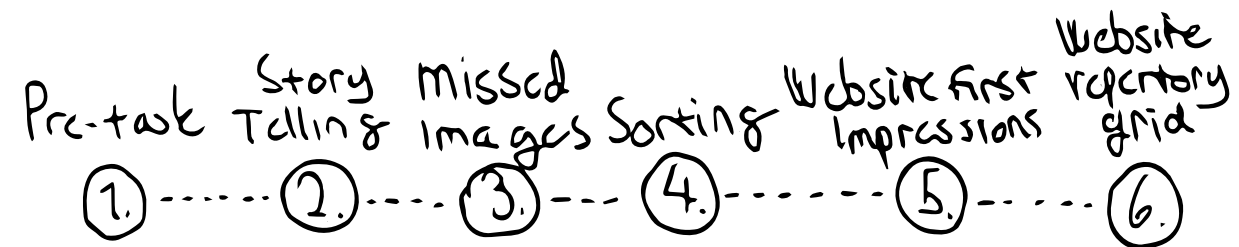


Figure 10: Interview process

1. PRE-TASK

Each interviewee was given two movie tickets worth 20 euros as an incentive to participate in the study. The interviews were recorded on video for later transcription. It was important to record the interviews on video instead of only audio to be able to recall which images or websites the interview participants referred to as they often discussed of images as “this” or “that” or in other undescriptive manner.

The interviews were conducted as one to one interviews. The duration of each of the interviews was maximum two hours.

By following the process of the ZMET interview (Zaltman, 1997), the participants were asked to collect 7 to 10 pictures which reflected their thoughts, emotions, or aspirations related to studies or career. The participants had 4 to 7 days to collect the pictures. Usually, the participants for ZMET interview are asked to collect the pictures over a period of 7 to 10 days (Gerald Zaltman, 1997). Due to time limitations of the project, this was not possible.

The participants were also asked to reflect between collecting the pictures instead of picking all of them at once. According to Zaltman (1997), participant generated pictures are richer in meaning and the time spent before the interview with processing relevant images expands the unconscious constructs, which can become explicit in the interview. It was emphasized for the participants that reflecting between selecting the pictures will improve the results of the interviews.

The participants were asked to collect pictures which reflected their thoughts, emotions, ideas, and aspirations related to their studies and career. The question was purposefully broad to understand the interviewees' needs beyond the category benefits. As discussed above, holistic understanding of the desires and anxieties of the consumers is a criterion for successful cultural branding according to Holt (2010).

The participants were free to use the method of their preference for collecting the pictures, e.g., internet, magazines. All of the participants collected the pictures from the internet and sent them one day in advance to be printed on paper by the interviewer.

The participants were asked to agree with the recording of the interviews and that the interviews will be anonymised to a degree that the participant cannot be identified from the material.

2. STORY TELLING

The participants were asked to describe the salient content of the pictures they chose for the interview, by starting from any picture they felt the easiest to talk about. According to Zaltman (1997), because participants have invested time in collecting pictures, and human memory and communication are story based, the participants have a particular story in mind they want to tell. In most cases, it seemed rather natural for the participants to start telling the stories of the pictures.

This step aimed to probe the deeper meaning of the pictures and their visual metaphors (Zaltman, 1997). In most of the cases, the discussions led to somewhat sensitive and existential issues to which other more product category focused methods probably would not have led. During the interview, the participants were asked to describe if the elements in pictures which had not been covered in the initial explanation presented some ideas. Covering all the elements of the pictures led the interviewees in many cases to discuss the relation of the topic to broader themes.

Some of the participants had images which were very similar to others. In these cases, the construct elicitation step of ZMET interview (Zaltman, 1997) was used to aid the participants to differentiate the pictures and their meaning. In this step three of the participant's pictures were randomly selected, and the interviewee was asked to think how any two are similar and yet different from the third to unveil basic constructs by which the pictures were different. The process was continued until the surfaced constructs become redundant. The construct elicitation step is somewhat identical to the standard process of Kelly's repertory grid technique.

Sometimes the participants' stories stayed on the surface level and were not very profound. Also in some of the cases, the participant's story stayed somewhat disconnected from a broader cultural context. In these cases, the metaphor elaboration step (Zaltman, 1997) was helpful. The participant was asked to imagine widening the frame of a picture to any direction and describe what would enter the picture and how this would change the picture's meaning. The metaphor elaboration enabled the participants to reflect to which broader themes the ideas of the picture were related.

3. MISSED IMAGES

By following the ZMET process (Zaltman, 1997), in this step, the participants were asked to describe the pictures they wanted to find but could not for some reason. As argued also by Zaltman (1997), many of the participants do not have any missed images, and also, in this case, only one of the respondents reported to have missed one image. The participant was instructed to tell or draw on paper what would have happened in the picture. However, the participant realized that another image already represented the same story, but not well as the missing picture could have.

4. SORTING

By following the ZMET process (Zaltman, 1997), in this step the participants were asked to cluster the pictures into groups with the same meaning. The sorting was done to streamline the later steps of the interview process. Some interviewees thought that some images had the same meaning, but when the stories of the pictures were compared in more detail, the pictures still had some differences. None of the interviewees had too many pictures. Hence, the pictures were not grouped to keep the discussion more fruitful.

Sometimes the participants forgot during the interview what some of the ZMET pictures

symbolized. The interview facilitator (author) collected notes of the meanings of the pictures to help later in the repertory grid phase the interviewees to remember the meanings of the ZMET pictures.

5. WEBSITE FIRST IMPRESSIONS

First, the participants were explained that this step aimed to discuss the associations the websites create, what they symbolize and what meaning they seem to try to convey in the opinion of the participants. In order to guide the discussion towards the themes of the study, it was emphasized that the aim of the interview was not to discuss the usability or the clarity of the website.

Before showing the websites to the participants they were asked "When you first see this website, what comes to mind; what are your first impressions? Does it bring some associations to your mind? Does this website remind you of something? Does it trigger any thoughts or emotions?" After, the participants were asked to browse freely through the website and talk aloud to answer the presented questions. When the participant answered the question, they were asked if they can clarify, which elements (cultural contents) on the website triggered this response. The task aimed to familiarize the participants with the websites to prepare them for the next task.

5. WEBSITE FIRST IMPRESSIONS

For this task, the interview facilitator had taken a screenshot of the front pages of the websites which were selected for the study and printed them on paper. When the websites were in paper format, they were more accessible for the participants, and it was easier to go back and point out elements on the websites they talked about during the discussion. As the pages were printed on paper, the interviewees were also able to see each of the pages simultaneously, which possibly triggered thoughts and enriched the discussion, which would have been more difficult by using a computer.

Following the idea of Kelly's repertory grid (Sampson, 1972) the interviewees were asked if some of the pictures, or the ideas discussed during the first task had something in common with some web pages. The facilitation process in this step differed from Kelly's repertory grid technique by letting the participants choose freely which combination of pictures and websites and the nature of their

relation they wanted to discuss. According to the description of Kelly's repertory grid technique (Sampson, 1972) the interviewer chooses which three products to show to the interviewee. According to the description of the process (Sampson, 1972), the interviewer also determines which of the two should have something in common and which of the pictures should be different from the two. This way of mapping the connection was tried when the interview process was tested before the actual interviews but was not used in the final interviews. The test interviewees found it very difficult to articulate the nature of the connection between the predetermined collection of pictures and websites and predetermined relations.

When a participant pointed out that a ZMET picture and a picture of a website had some connection, they were asked to describe the nature of the connection and related themes and if there were some specific elements on the website that triggered these associations. After the interviewee clarified the nature of the connection, some of the connections turned out to be contradictions instead of a match between the website associations and the story of the picture.

Next, the interviewer asked from the interviewee if there was something else which connected the picture and the website. By loosely following the triangulation process of Kelly's repertory grid technique (Sampson, 1972), the interviewer helped the interviewee to articulate their thoughts by presenting one by one pictures of other websites. The interviewees were asked website by website what the ZMET picture and the first website had in common that the other website did not have.

In case the participant was not able to come up with more explanations of the associations, and the interviewer had reached a sufficient understanding of the nature of the connection, the interviewee was asked if the ZMET picture had a connection with some other website. The same process of discussing the relationship between the ZMET picture and the website was repeated with the other websites until there were no websites left.

After the participant had pointed out and explained all the connections between the ZMET picture and the website they were asked if the ideas of the picture were in contradiction with any of the websites. This step led the interviewees to discuss the cultural contradictions they had with some group identities the website myths were part of.

If the interviewer realized that the interviewee had not pointed out a connection nor a contradiction between the ZMET picture and some of the websites the interviewee was asked

website by the website if the ZMET picture had some connection or was in contradiction with the website. In some cases, the story of the picture and the associations of the website neither contradicted nor had anything in common due to very distant concepts of the two.

At the end of the interview, the interviewee was asked if some of the websites were somehow similar in their meaning or if the meaning of some of the websites contradicted in some way with each other.



Figure 11: interviewee
ZMET pictures paired with
printed websites

4.4 INTERVIEW DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

The interview videos were transcribed with Inqscribe software, by additionally marking which pictures or websites the participants discussed when referring to them with unspecific words like “this” or “that.” The transcriptions were then coded by using the ATLAS.ti software which enables coding of video, text, and audio. ATLAS.ti also helps to analyze the coding by enabling the user to build visual networks between codes, to see how many times each code has been used in the transcription and to cluster the codes into categories.

I color coded the transcriptions into three different categories according to Barthes’ three orders of meaning (see figure 7). The blue codes in the figure represent the denotative, strictly linked meaning of the website elements, i.e. the cultural codes. The orange codes represent their connotative, second-order meanings, i.e. values, emotions, and attitudes. The green codes represent the ideologies and myths the participant desired, i.e. the third level of meaning. The red codes represent contradictions and the purple codes represent the brand websites. By this categorization, it was possible to point out which ideologies the interviewees desired, which cultural codes the websites used, which mythologies and ideologies the cultural codes conveyed and how the ideologies and myths were aligned or contradicted with the interviewees’ ideology desires.

The codes of the denotative meanings were then connected to the connotative meanings which they triggered and the resulting mythological level meanings in a visual network. The visualized network enabled to understand which cultural codes resulted in which connotative meanings and mythological level responses to the connotations. Building the visual networks between the signifiers and signifieds made it easier later in the design process to understand, which signs not to use in the website content in order to avoid associating the brand with not preferred mythologies or ideologies.

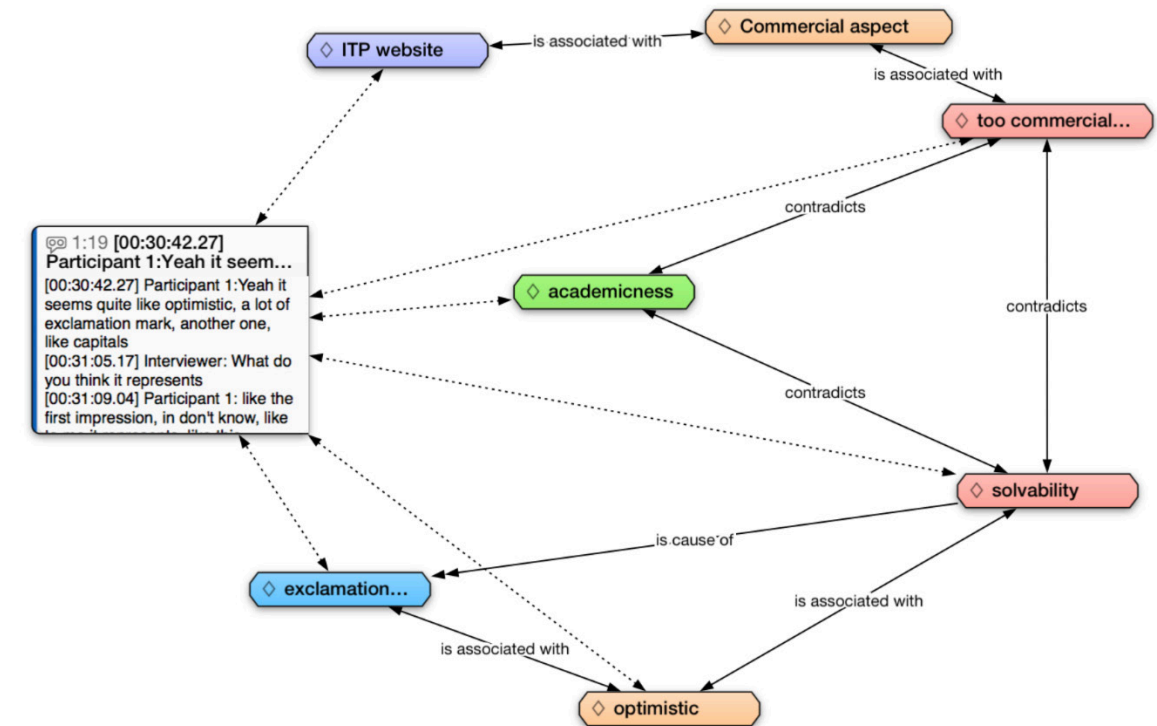


Figure 12: Visual network of first, second, and third level codes and contradictions related to academic ideologies.

5. RESULTS

As a result of the analysis, I was able to understand (1) which websites conveyed which myths and ideologies, meaning the cultural orthodoxy, (2) how the cultural orthodoxy contradicted with the participant's ideological needs, and (3) which ideologies the interviewees desired instead, i.e. ideological opportunities. The results are qualitative and do not describe the quantitative aspect of the ideological opportunities.

In the end, the interviewees were identified to desire 15 different ideologies. Out of these 15 ideologies, eight were not associated with more than one of the current websites. These ideologies, which were associated with only one website were considered ideological opportunities. Holt (2016) defines cultural orthodoxy as conventional cultural expressions, taken for granted within a category. Hence, the rest, seven ideologies which were associated with two or more of the websites, were considered to represent conventional cultural expressions and the cultural orthodoxy. The cultural orthodoxy was analyzed to result in five different cultural contradictions. The identified cultural orthodoxy, cultural contradictions, ideological opportunities and the results of the semiotic analysis are discussed below.

The associations between ideologies and the websites and between the contradictions and the websites were categorized as "Associated", "Not associated", and "No data". "Associated" means that a contradiction or ideology was associated with a website. "Not associated" means that a contradiction or ideology was not associated with a website due to some contradiction. "No data" means that either, there was not a connection between the ideology or contradictions and a website because of distant concepts or the connection was not discussed in the interview. Additionally, in visualizations below "✓" represents if the semiotic analysis resulted in the same finding.

Semiotic analysis result ✓ Not associated ● No data ● Associated ●

Figure 13: Website association mapping labels

5.1 CULTURAL ORTHODOXY

Altogether seven cultural expressions were identified to be conventional between the websites. The cultural expressions part of cultural orthodoxy were named as: Innovation, On the Pulse, Personal Path, Play for Creativity, Humane Student Life, Sustainability, and Multidisciplinarity. As Holt (2012) argues, the categories which from traditional strategies’ point of view look like red oceans can turn out to be blue oceans from the cultural branding perspective. One could think that for a university design program to be successful it must promote ideologies which promote innovation, sustainability, multidisciplinarity, playful creativity, student-centeredness and push students to find their personal path in this world. However, as visible from the ideological opportunities section, there might be a demand for a set of entirely different ideologies. The conventional cultural expressions, which represent the cultural orthodoxy will be discussed below.

INNOVATION



Figure 14: Which of the websites were associated with Innovation

Participant 3: yeah, i think these kind of resonate (picture of hobbyist urban farmers with ASM website), i feel if you'd go here (ASM) you'd only get to this level (amateur) fidelity,yeah like the things you learn here will not really enable you to innovate... for example this one, (MIT), like i think you'll get the skills to innovate, in a true sense, of course the MIT brand is so strong

Interviewer: what about this one (IDBM)

Participant 3: Definitely, i could see myself going here, almost it feels like high end, you don't create shitty prototypes here...it's about the structure of things, they are on the point of what they are doing, it's professional but in a way that appeals to students i think

Ideologies that promote innovation are naturally related to design education programs which resulted in three of the websites to associate with such an ideology. Interviewees also perceived some of the programs’ promises of innovativeness to be unrealistic. Also, the interviewees associated some of the websites with unprofessional, hobbyist type of innovation activities, which do not represent true innovation.

ON THE PULSE



Figure 15: Which of the websites were associated with On the Pulse

Participant 4: this (ITP) is student friendly, they know what's going on also in the society, networking, etc, the events, the facebook, you know it's like an event, something is happening, this (USchool) is like ice age, maybe what they are teaching, they even call this as usability school, you have to call it as ux design, i just wouldn't go there at all

On a varying level students associated all the other programs but USchool to be on the pulse of the happenings of the world. One could say that being on the pulse, as an ideology, is related to start-ups and such entities. This association was perceived as a mandatory hygiene type ideology of a program but being associated with altogether four programs it is not much of a differentiator for a brand.

PERSONAL PATH



Figure 16: Which of the websites were associated with Personal Path

Participant 3:If i'd say flexibility i would say this one(ASM) but if i would speak about the focus it self, i would say this one (IDBM) or this one (ITP) the reason is the text makes me think it's really flexible (ASM)...it's kind of ok for me to wonder around and try things, and this one (IDBM) is more of the opposite, i have to do this, so it's a bit more stiff

Students had also a desire for ideologies which support exploring one’s personal path. Students perceived the ITP and ASM programs to be more flexible due to their broader course offering. IDBM was thought to prepare well for a career in a straightforward way, but it contradicted for the same reason with the participants’ needs for flexibility. The USchool website associated with a very traditional, hierarchical and academic program due to the outdated visual style and “academic” tone of voice and passive writing style.

PLAY FOR CREATIVITY



Figure 17: Which of the websites were associated with Play for Creativity

Participant 3: it goes here (ITP), it's like the next level of playing, yeah it's like, they are still playing...but they have to work, that's the only difference (laugh), but they are having fun, that might be actually what's appealing to me

Interviewer: does it contradict then with some

Participant 3: sort of with this (IDBM)...they are very realistic, i don't feel like you are going here to play, you are going to work hard...to me it's negative...usually you have to play, to be a good designer, and you have to do things, that are not all related to this corporate world...to come up with solutions, that are not, just repeating

Interviewer: is there then some other that it would go together with

Participant 3: yeah this (MIT) based on the video which was the most the most striking on this whole website, they sort of seem to be embracing that, alternative way of thinking, and it seems like they were literally playing with the piano, and it's maker movement stuff, you are just playing with the technology

According to some students, to be a good designer one also has to play. This ideology was associated with the pictures of students having fun on the ITP website and with the video on the MIT website in which for example a student presented a technological piano art installation. The IDBM site's minimal and restricted visual style was associated with the corporate world which is why it contradicted with the idea of creative play.

HUMANE STUDENT LIFE



Figure 18: Which of the websites were associated with Humane Student Life

Participant 3: This (picture of the participants hobby) could go here (with ITP), because it has this very empathic approach to student's and their lifestyle...it contradicts with this one (IDBM), because this one (ITP) is about the lifestyle of it, this one looks almost like the future, it really looks like it's strategically building your skills for the future...it's more on point, and it's very fact based

Interviewer: what about this (MIT) then
Participant 3: yes, it's very much about what's going on in that place, it's not much about how it feels to be there, but more like what are the opportunities of this place, yeah it's not like, not very humane

Participant 4: This one (USchool) is not at least at all from student' perspective, it's really cold, it's this kind of organization, and this one (ASM) is at least explaining what, why, still it's just like this learning outcomes, is it just this, only these four things, i would like to go there or there(IDBM and MIT) but i wouldn't like to go here (ASM, USchool) although i know nothing it (MIT) still makes me want to join, or at least mingle with people, and go to these events

Students associated ITP, IDBM and MIT websites with humane student life. The USchool website was perceived as altogether distant. The ITP website for example has a lot of pictures of student events and other events alike which is why it was perceived to care about students. However, the ITP atmosphere was also thought to be quite ambitious and hence, not so humane.

SUSTAINABILITY



Figure 19: Which of the websites were associated with Sustainability

Participant 3: yeah, i mean, as a designer you have this responsibility to take care of nature, and to create meaningful experiences in nature, i think i'm more than average interested in that,

Participant 4: I would say this one goes with the IDBM one, for some reason with this one (MIT) as well because you have this sustainability approach, because of the text ...i would put this (MIT) together with nature and with this as well as they now what's happening, (ASM) and how we should change our behaviour...this one again feels to be so out of the context, (USchool) they are just doing their stuff but no connection to real world.

Participant 1: When we look at climate change and all the like what it influences I think the biggest problem our generation is going to face how to somehow find a way to reverse the process and live in this new situation

Some participants took for granted that all the programs which were associated to be modern promoted sustainability. Hence, the ITP, MIT, IDBM and ASM websites were associated to promote sustainability. The USchool website, on the other hand, seemed to be out of date, disconnected from the world and was not associated with such ideologies.

MULTIDISCIPLINARITY

IDEOLOGY	ITP	IDBM	MIT	ASM	USCHOOL
Multidisciplinarity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Figure 20: Which of the websites were associated with Multidisciplinarity

Participant 2: and then the picture is there, again i feel that everyone is talking about like multidisciplinary, everyone is talking about collaborating with companies, i just don't know what concretely are people doing

An ideology which promotes multidisciplinarity was perceived as a hygiene type characteristic. It was associated with all of the programs and hence was the most conventional ideology in the category.

5.2 CONTRADICTIONS

The cultural orthodoxy of the websites was analyzed to result in six different contradictions. The contradictions were named as: Authenticity Extinction, Authority, Solutionism atlas complex, Ambition overdose and Middlebrow Megachurch Infotainment. Like Fiske and Hartley (2005) discuss, myths are evaluated from 2 directions; (1) how well they answer to the current cultural needs and (2) from their iconic accuracy of their denotative level signs, i.e. cultural codes. Most of the websites were uncredible according to the interviewees. The Authenticity Extinction contradiction seemed to be partly a problem with the iconic accuracy of the cultural codes. The Authority, Solutionism, Atlas complex, Ambition Overdose and Middlebrow Megachurch Infotainment contradictions seemed to represent cultural anxieties.

AUTHENTICITY EXTINCTION

CONTRADICTION	ITP	IDBM	MIT	ASM	USCHOOL
Authenticity Extinction					

Figure 21: Which of the websites were associated with Authenticity Extinction

Participant 3:because it's like one out of ten statistically...i've seen so many pitches, but how many of those are going somewhere, it's not sort of realistic

Participant 1: So these are like unrealistic (other pictures) and this is more realistic (IDBM) but in a negative way

All websites were thought to lack authenticity or to be unrealistic in their ambition and commercial touch. For example, because ITP was associated with startups it was thought to be unrealistic because very few of startups eventually become successful. Those, which were thought to be realistic in some cases, like IDBM, were thought to be that only in a negative way. Hence, a realistic but an appealing myth might be a significant differentiator for a brand.

AUTHORITY



Figure 22: Which of the websites were associated with Authority

Participant 1: I would put it here (picture of a bee hive with IDBM website) because of this corporate idea, might be part of working life, and part of a larger corporation...I wouldn't use this to advertise your studies, because there is not much individualism in it, like this ambition driven thing

Participant 1: I wouldn't enjoy this (ITP) summer school and this also because of a black background and maybe because of this black white it also looks a bit strict like, these two don't look too empathic (ITP & IDBM)

All other programs than the ITP were perceived as authoritarian due to their program structure, too guiding course offering, a tone of voice or themes discussed on the websites.

SOLUTIONISM ATLAS COMPLEX



Figure 23: Which of the websites were associated with Solutionism Atlas Complex

Participant 1 :like carrying the weight of the world, which I don't think is necessary...design is just a part of process and I don't think that any profession or anyone in particular is responsible for, there is so many factors that play into it and I also don't think that design per se can change the world

ITP and MIT were perceived to be very solution driven which seemed to contradict with the students’ world view. The ITP website’s bold copy was associated with a kind of atlas complex of designers who unrealistically believe they can change the world just by themselves. The solutionism and atlas complex seemed to contradict with the students’ experience of the world, and its problems getting more and more complicated.

AMBITION OVERDOSE



Figure 24: Which of the websites were associated with Ambition Overdose

ITP and IDBM programs were thought to be overly ambitious driven instead of aiming for balance between work and leisure.

MIDDLEBROW MEGACHURCH INFOTAINMENT



Figure 25: Which of the websites were associated with Middle Megachurch Infotainment

Participant 1:I think like TED-talk, like the idea that anything, like any problem can be solved or understood within 30 minute timeframe and think that's not like, it simplifies things, it claims to offer solutions that's not always the case...like maybe in the end it should be simple and understandable as a part of service design but also this idea that you do good research and go into many aspects of...you are dealing with human behaviours a lot, and that's generally complex so if you compress that into this kind of TED-talk as and outcome it would be maybe ok but it also has a danger that it's too simplified and I wonder if you want to as a school promote simplicity, I mean simplicity is also a big thing in design

The term Middlebrow Megachurch Infotainment refers to the phenomenon of events like TED-talks, which simplify complex concepts into easy to understand versions, accessible and exciting for the public. The term is used by members of an ideology who claim these events oversimplify complex concepts just to make them entertaining without representing the real complexity of the topic. Both ITP and IDBM websites had pictures of conferences and presentations on their websites which were associated with this phenomenon.

5.3 IDEOLOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES

The identified ideological opportunities were named as:Academia, Artistic Inspection, Critical Thinking, Close Community, Empathy, Finlandism, Maker Movement and Perfection Craftsmanship. These ideologies and their relation to cultural contradictions will be discussed below.

ACADEMIA



Figure 26: Which of the websites were associated with Academia

Participant 1: Yeah it seems quite like optimistic, a lot of exclamation mark, another one, like capitals ... to me it represents, like this solvability idea so like i have this idea that it's more about like designing towards an outcome than researching and finding problem... so this academicness to it, it's a shame that they don't also address that, like for me it feels a bit like if you promote this like working towards a service thing i think for me it just shows "oh you can make money"

Participant 4: to me it's this associational, traditional education, just very traditional, like you do the things, one by one, to me it's like if they haven't bothered to make a nice website, i'm immediately suspicious, are they even interested in the students

A myth of academia seemed to resolve the anxiety against money and solution-driven mindset. Academic ideologies were discussed to contradict especially with the content of the ITP website, which was perceived to promote solutionism. Being associated with academic ideologies seemed to easily turn into a contradiction. The ideologies related to academia can appear as very traditional, hierarchical and less student-centered authority driven ideologies, like in the case of USchool. This can, however, indicate that the USchool brand has some level of cultural and political authority to express myths related academia.

ARTISTIC INSPECTION



Figure 27: Which of the websites were associated with Artistic Inspection

Participant 3: this doesn't feel anywhere, what's missing is the artistic creativity, that's not directed to something business related, for example i would think that this would fit to some like arts and crafts school, or some place which is not so linked to what's happening, in the industry, in the same way

Participant 1: in my bachelor we didn't do it that much what were more individual...you can really, like, explore your own values...it's more interesting as an artistic inspection to find what you like as a person which, is not that much addressed, so far in COID, I think because it's all team works so you get constantly explain consensus

None of the websites were associated with artistic creativity driven ideologies that encourage to explore one’s values. The demand for such an ideology seemed to result from the programs’ close connection to industries and their emphasis on multidisciplinary and teamwork. The myth of artistic inspection fulfilled some sort of need to explore alternatives in a creative ways instead of being business driven. The USchool website however was perceived to contradict with this myth which may indicate some lack of authority to address such topic.

CRITICAL THINKING



Figure 28: Which of the websites were associated with Critical Thinking

Participant 1: i think in order to achieve that we need to be very critical towards how things are going now but on the other hand you can't solve it alone like it is something that almost the world as a whole needs to work together to solve

Participant 1: this (MIT) also sounds like really straightforward to, as this technology as a solution to many problems...i think it's a bad thing, because technology in itself is more than a neutral thing, so i think technology alone doesn't solve any problems...these topics are super complicated...critical approach is really necessary and it's also there but, yeah like, this video for me it draws for me a really positive thing...i think more the philosophical approach to, where the technology, how it interacts with people, i think that should be the core

Participant 1: this is very essentials (IDBM) like what you need to know, so i might feel this goes a bit deeper (USchool) although it might be only text wise, maybe because it's a bit harder to digest, like you have to focus a bit more to get the content, while here (IDBM) it's really like presented consume easily...i think the danger in this kind of format is the same with ted talks, like it's such a cliché, iconic...it kind of undermines the content because the way it's presented you associate it with this dirty style...for a school it really tells how they want to be seen, and what they are aiming at

Participant 1: I think this school should also put a bit more awareness into that design can also be used for, or design methodology, can also be used for things that are not good for people, not that we should design for them, but design can also be critical or have a negative impact and umm, so I feel that we're kind of being kept in a dark... design methods for instance can be used in political discourse

Participant 1: i think this (ITP) is really like shouting commercial

Many of the programs contradicted with the students’ need for more critical ideologies as they were associated with contradictions like solutionism. According to the interviewees, a philosophical, more critical approach is mandatory in order for us to be able to solve the complicated problems of today. The technology centredness and positive attitude of the MIT website was to associated with the oversimplification of the issues and hence contradicted with the critical approach. IDBM, on the other hand, was thought to lack depth in its education contents. ITP was associated with commercialism. The contents on the USchool website were harder to digest and hence associated with critical ideologies.

CLOSE COMMUNITY



Figure 29: Which of the websites were associated with Close Community

Participant 1: i hope, like we will, like this idea of competition, i don't think it's, or the idea that everybody is each others competitor, i think that's not necessarily a good view of the world, so i hope that in terms of, like, economics, and economic incentives will go more towards a collaborative ideal yeah i think that's quite important

Participant 1: I would put them there (Picture of holding hands with USchool)...collaboration, taking care of each other...It's a same for this (ASM)...like, collaboration, taking care of each other

Participant 2: if you're doing a minor in service design it's not like you are doing a minor in service design department, you are just kind of taking classes which are relevant, so are you going to have this kind of impression that this is a community or is it more like you are going to be in a class with bunch of people and you don't have a sense of who's there because they are not in the same minor with you, because i think it's nice as well to have kind of like group feeling

Some students reported that the rise of ambition and competition driven individualism contradicted with their worldview according to which we should collaborate more. ASM and USchool were associated with collaboration, but they appeared just as a group of courses without a community connecting people. Only ITP was perceived to have a community.

EMPATHY



Figure 30: Which of the websites were associated with Empathy

Participant 1: i wouldn't enjoy this (itp) summer school and this (idbm) also because of a black background and maybe because of this black white it also looks a bit strict like, these two don't look to empathic (ITP & IDBM), this is just rigid (idbm) and this is just crazy (ITP)

Many students experienced that empathic ideologies would be needed in university and in the world in general. An empathic mindset was also associated with the participants’ major program. However, none of the minor program websites were associated with an empathic mindset, and the ITP and IDBM websites’ associations even contradicted with it.

FINLANDISM



Figure 31: Which of the websites were associated with Finlandism

Participant 2: it's almost like i cannot put this anywhere (photo of nordic flags) because everyone, well here actually (USchool), everyone has all these sentence like international,

Some students preferred to emerge more with Finnish culture and wanted to experience the myth of Finnish design tradition. All the websites except the USchool website were perceived to promote internationality, which contradicted with the identity projects related to Finland and Finnish design tradition.

MAKER MOVEMENT



Figure 32: Which of the websites were associated with Maker Movement

Participant 3: this (picture of a 3D printer) goes definitely here (with MIT)...it was about explaining the possibilities, and very like hands on, tinkering with the technology, so actually it could be like here

One of the participants had a picture of a 3d printer, which was associated with a myth of maker movement. The ZMET picture was associated with a video on the MIT website, which represented lots of creative, hands-on ways of using technologies to create tangible results.

Interviewer: what kind of world do you think what these (ASM, USchool) are part of as they are not part of this makers and doers thing
Participant 3: to me it's this associational, traditional education, just very traditional, like you do the things, one by one

Speaker 3: the next one is transitioning to this maker movement, we have this explosion of do it yourself mentality... and i think it also raises awareness...you will have a completely different view of production materials, hopefully, and the possibilities of what you can actually do yourself, and also maybe this repair mentality...micromovements kind of a mentality, where these communities are cooperating to solve a problem, in a creative way, and they are not necessarily designers, just average people so...you don't need a government or corporation to intervene to kind of solve something...and i like this movement of independent space agencies...they have shown that anyone can actually do this

The ASM and USchool websites seemed to contradict with the myth of maker movement as the participants associated them with very traditional education. The contradiction may be a consequence of the USchool website’s visual style being quite outdated. Both sites also displayed very little or no signs of hands-on work but discussed the topics mainly on a theoretical level.

PERFECTION CRAFTSMANSHIP



Figure 33: Which of the websites were associated with Perfection Craftsmanship

Participant 3: i'm attracted to this..this sort of functional, thinking and, sort of, it's a simple product but it has this sort of whole mindset to it...it's more than just a thing you can sit on, it's sort of, it's a statement in itself, in a way it's not about the product it self, it's about the associations you get from it, in this it's kind of the way they use only one material and exploit that to almost to perfection

Participant 3:this part (IDBM program structure part) that kind of composition to it, and it's quite functional, again it seems a bit crafted, it has a target, in a way, that has been considered...these ones (ASM & USchool) the text based, so they don't have a vision...I mean like a value set that you can actually, discern from what...this (ITP) is like very rich in a way, almost like too much information...I feel this is more about the process, rather than being the final outcome of it.

A myth of perfection driven design tradition performed by Alvar Aalto and designers alike appealed to some students. None of the websites were associated to contradict with this myth because the programs were perceived to lack distinctive focus areas and to focus on process instead of outcomes. Some visual designs on the IDBM website were associated with this myth but not the site in total.

5.4 SUMMARY

Semiotic analysis result ✓ Associated ●
Not associated ● No data ●

CULTURAL ORTHODOXY

IDEOLOGY	ITP	IDBM	MIT	ASM	USCHOOL
Innovation	✓	✓	✓	●	●
On the Pulse	●	●	●	●	●
Personal Path	●	●	●	●	●
Play for Creativity	●	●	●	●	●
Humane Student life	●	●	●	●	●
Sustainability	●	●	●	●	●
Multidisciplinarity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Internationality	✓	✓	✓	●	●

Figure 35: Cultural orthodoxy ideologies

CONTRADICTIONS

CONTRADICTION	ITP	IDBM	MIT	ASM	USCHOOL
Authenticity Extinction	●	●	●	●	●
Authority	●	●	●	●	●
Solutionism Atlas Complex	●	●	●	●	●
Ambition Overdose	✓	●	●	●	●
Middlebrow Megachurch Infotainment	✓	✓	●	●	●

Figure 36: Contradictions

IDEOLOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES

IDEOLOGY	ITP	IDBM	MIT	ASM	USCHOOL
Academia	●	●	✓	✓	✓
Artistic Inspection	●	●	●	●	●
Critical Thinking	●	●	●	●	●
Close Community	●	●	●	●	●
Empathy	●	●	●	●	●
Finlandism	●	●	●	●	●
Maker Movement	●	●	✓	●	●
Perfection Craftsmanship	●	●	●	●	●

Figure 37: Ideological opportunities

Although these results do not represent quantitative information, they still revealed some interesting patterns. ITP, IDBM, and MIT seem to have the highest amount of associations with the interviewees needs which were part of cultural orthodoxy. However, all three websites were also associated with the highest number of cultural contradictions as well. USchool with ASM were associated the least with the conventions of the cultural orthodoxy. Interestingly, USchool was associated with the highest amount of ideological opportunities, ideologies which not many of the other websites were associated with. This position might give a unique cultural and political authority for USchool to leverage these opportunities.

As mentioned above, one could say that the conventional cultural expressions (see figure 35.) are mandatory for a design education program to appeal to the students. However, as visible, many of these conventional cultural expressions offer little chance for differentiating from the competitors, with a culturally relevant ideology.

Solutionism, Authenticity Extinction, Ambition Overdose and Middlebrow Megachurch Infotainment (see figure 36.) seem to be a type of characteristics that one may associate with the rise of startup

culture, like in the case of ITP. Authenticity Extinction and Authority, on the other hand, are the type of contradictions that brands cause in general (D. B. Holt, 2002).

Out of the ideological opportunities (see figure 37.), Academia, Critical Thinking, Artistic Inspection, and the Maker Movement related ideologies seem to have in common that they are not very business driven. Also for many of the ideologies, like those related to community thinking, maker movement and empathy the importance of remaining humane seems one of the core interests. On the other hand, for ideologies related to academia, artistic inspection, critique, and the maker movement, achieving social impact seems to be a common interest.

Based on this summary there seemed to be a social disruption taking place. The students seemed to be abandoning for instance competitive, business-driven, socially irresponsible ideologies. As a result of this shift in culture, there seemed to be multiple opportunities for developing a culturally relevant brand by leveraging the demand for ideologies driven for instance by humanism, social responsibility, critical thinking and community thinking

SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS RESULTS COMPARED TO INTERVIEW RESULTS

The only cultural expressions the websites were identified with semiotic analysis to convey were innovation and multidisciplinary. The interviews resulted in academia related ideologies to be one of the ideological opportunities. However, academia was analyzed to be expressed by ASM and USchool websites and hence to be a rather conventional cultural expression. ITP, IDBM, and MIT websites' semiotics were analyzed to express internationality. This exemplifies how only the myths relevant for interviewees will be unveiled with the examined methodology. The conventionality of internationality was still visible in the ideological opportunities as none of the websites were associated with the students' desire to emerge with Finnish culture.

I was also able to identify some of the same contradictions in the semiotic analysis. The identified contradictions were Ambition Overdose and Middlebrow Megachurch Infotainment. However, it was not certain, whether target groups would prefer the ambition-driven ideology or would it contradict with their identity projects as it did according to the interview analysis.

As visible here, the semiotic analysis resulted in only a fraction of the an understanding compared to interview results.

6. DISCUSSION

DEFINITION COMPARISON

Holt has also made a comparison of different branding strategies against cultural branding in his book "How Brands Become Icons: The Principles of Cultural Branding" (2004). The review of this thesis resulted in a few new comparisons. Holt's theory on how brands become icons (2004) covers how brands emerge and how social networks around brands function according to cultural branding but there is very little comparison to traditional definitions. This thesis discusses how a brand emerges, and how different stakeholders interact with a brand according to both the traditional definitions of brand and the cultural branding theory. The cultural branding strategy is in many ways a combination of existing, former ideas and is not the first to discuss the cultural relevance of brand (Holt, 2004). Hence, despite the lack of academic reviews on the definition of cultural branding, these ideas have been discussed and promoted by many practitioners and academics.

METHODOLOGY EXAMINATION

As suggested by theories (Christensen & Olson, 2002; Gerald Zaltman, 1997; van Kleef, van Trijp, & Luning, 2005), the ZMET interview tasks resulted in the participants discussing very personal, profound, and even subconscious needs based on the feedback from the interviewees. These topics covered for instance relationships with parents and hidden deep anxieties of one's future in life between career and family. Some of the participants reported that they were not totally aware of the existence of these thoughts before the interviews and that they enjoyed the process of self-reflection when collecting the pictures. Based on my experience, this is rather difficult to achieve by using other interview methods such as the laddering technique. The participants had also been informed that the results of the interviews would be anonymised which possibly encouraged them to discuss such sensitive topics.

The facilitation of the interviews did not require many preparations from the interviewer's behalf. Because the format of the interview is somewhat unstructured, besides the research question only the websites need to be chosen and prepared to be presented in some easy to access format. The process as exemplified here should be repeatable as is for other similar research cases.

Kelly's repertory grid technique seemed to be an efficient way to map which myths and ideologies the websites expressed and how these myths appeared to fulfil the interviewees' identity desires.

The repertory grid technique enabled to turn the rather unstructured findings of the ZMET into a more structured format.

Using Barthes' ideas as an analysis framework was essential to distinct the subjective mythologies and beliefs from values, emotions and attitudes shared within broader culture. Barthes' theory was a useful alternative to Holt's rather limited definition of myth. Barthes' theory gives a deeper understanding of what myths are and how they function.

SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS VERSUS THE INTERVIEW METHODOLOGY

As visible from the results summary, the interviews resulted not only in a much more profound understanding of the identity desires but also a radically different one compared to the semiotic analysis. The semiotic analysis was useful to distinct personal preferences from the interview results. Nevertheless, it seems that the type of methodology used to conduct and analyze the interviews more likely results in an understanding that is required to build iconic brands.

6.1 LIMITATIONS OF THIS WORK

DEFINITION COMPARISON

To be reasonable, it is essential to acknowledge that the review in this thesis was not systematic. The systematic review which was used as a basis for understanding traditional definitions of brand was also rather old. There seemed to be only a few reviews about definitions of brand and none as comprehensive as the one by Leslie de Chernatony and Francesca Dall'Omo Riley (1998).

METHODOLOGY EXAMINATION

I combined the parts of the methods, which within the time constraints seemed to serve the goal of the project in the best way. The ZMET interview process includes usually more steps in which participants use non-visual senses. These steps may include for instance describing a short movie that describes their thoughts and feelings about the research topic in question or forming a summary image or a montage that expresses the topic under study. According to Zaltman (1997), the main trade-off of leaving out the steps mentioned above is a less rich representation of abstract thoughts. According to him these methods use different parts of the brain than other methods of the technique and incorporate elicitation and probing of metaphors tied to the motor and perceptual systems, physical movement and sense of spatial movement. The summary image and the montage task were included in the test version of the interview process. Together, however, all of the ZMET tasks, the analysis of the websites and the repertory grid task took more than 2 hours, which appeared to be too exhausting for the interviewees. Secondly, the steps turned out to be very hard to facilitate for the interviewer. Thirdly, using more time on doing the construct elicitation between the websites and the pictures served better the purpose of the interview instead of the steps which were left out.

As the participants are required to collect the pictures before the interviews over a period of 8 to 10 days, it might be hard to motivate the interviewees to do the collection carefully or to participate the study. However, it seems that the participants were motivated as they got informed that the

quality of collected pictures and reflection time between collecting them impacts the final quality of the interview results.

Kelly's repertory grid technique has been criticised to result in superficial findings (Sampson, 1972). However, the in-depth discussions during the ZMET tasks earlier in the interview enabled the interviewees to discuss the topics in the same, deep level when discussing the relations of the ZMET pictures and the corresponding identity desires to websites and the myths those conveyed.

Only the front pages of the websites were printed for the Kelly's repertory grid task. Because of this, there is a chance that other pages of the website might have conveyed some other myths but those were not identified in this study. However, a front page is often the first page a visitor encounters when visiting a site and results in a first impression. Therefore the myths that the front page conveys, have the strongest impact on the visitor. The problem of reviewing only the front page myths could be solved possibly by showing smaller sections of the pages from all pages of the site.

Holt (2004) argues, that to systematically build iconic brands, companies must assemble cultural knowledge rather than knowledge about individual customers. Hence, in order to determine the solution space further, some quantitative methods would be beneficial. Although Kelly's repertory grid technique in the project example was used in some sense as a quantitative metric, it does not present quantitative information of how many consumers think in a certain way.

Although Barthes' ideas as a framework enables to distinct the mythologies from values it is possible that understanding the mythologies and the underlying ideologies would be rather difficult without being a member of the same culture as the interviewees to some extent. Hence, although it felt natural for me to use the results of the interviews as a starting point to investigate the related myths, it might be more difficult for someone without such an involvement in the target group's culture. However, the ZMET enables the participants to discuss their subjective mythologies in quite detail, which should enable to understand the mythologies even for a person without cultural membership.

Due to scope limitations of the project, the sample included only 4 respondents from only one targeted program. The program was also targeted for students of cognitive science programs at University of Helsinki and computer science students of the Department of Science at Aalto

University. Despite the rather small sample size, this small-scale study offers useful information for other, larger studies as the first methodological exercise of its kind for the purposes of locating ideological opportunities for web design.

6.2 FUTURE WORK

According to my experience, compared to traditional user research the exemplified process was somewhat resource intensive. Hence, improving the efficiency of the interview and analysis process could improve its deployment to practitioners' processes. However in cultural branding, it's essential to empathize with the target group's identity desires, which is something that might be only possible by emerging one's perspective with the target group's perspective over time.

In cultural branding, the aim is to understand the mass instead of individual consumers. Hence, one exciting future research direction would be to find out what would be the best quantitative methods, modern ways of using consumer data or other ways of improving this type of understanding.

As was mentioned above, there doesn't seem to be many systematic reviews on the definition or practices of branding, which is why there seems to be a demand for such literature. There are some articles on cultural branding theory but not many academic articles nor practitioner articles which discuss the practical execution of the strategy. Because of this and to validate the findings of this thesis there is a need for further research on the practices of cultural branding.

According to my personal experiences, the current practices of doing service and UX-design neglect the importance of cultural relevance of the resulting solutions and lack a systematic process of reaching this goal. Hence, another exciting research question for future work is: how ideological opportunities can be used as design drivers for product and service design, and how to materialize myths and ideologies into cultural design solutions.

6.3 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As may be visible from this thesis, cultural branding can be an efficient way to utilize consumers' identity desires for the benefits of firms. The more effective the strategy to do this, the more important it is to consider the ethical problems with guiding people's behavior for commercial benefit. As mentioned in the interviews of this thesis, one could say that design and more effective branding strategies can be used for good but also for bad. Because of these purposes branding seems to have a stigma among design practitioners and not necessarily without reason.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis aimed to discuss how to identify ideological opportunities to develop a cultural branding strategy. To answer to this question this thesis had two research questions:

1. *What we can learn from (1) using a combination of Zaltman metaphor elicitation technique (ZMET) and Kelly's repertory grid technique to interview consumers, and (2) from using Barthes' ideas of meaning as a framework to analyze interviews to identify ideological opportunities for web design*
2. *How a brand is defined and how brands function according to cultural branding compared to traditional definitions of branding.*

The contributions of this thesis are two-fold: a review of definitions of brand and bridging cultural branding theory and practice through a web design case. This thesis fills gaps in research by studying (1) definitions of brand, (2) means for implementing cultural branding strategy, and (3) means for studying the cultural and mythological meaning of websites.

7.1 DEFINITION REVIEW

This study began with a literature review comparing the definition of brand and how brands function according to cultural branding versus traditional definitions of brand. As main literature on the traditional definitions, this study used a review on the topic by de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley (1998) and additionally a review on the history of branding by Bastos and Levy (2012)

Traditional definitions of brand (de Chernatony and Riley, 1998) seem to define a brand to consist of abstract values. According to Gardner and Levy (As cited in Bastos & Levy, 2012) for a brand to achieve success, it has to express these values in a consistent manner. In cultural branding (Holt, 2012) a brand is defined as a performer of, and a container for an identity myth. Holt (2010) argues that the aim of cultural branding is to address and acute contradiction in society, with a right ideology, which is dramatized through a right myth with right cultural codes.

De Chernatony and Riley (1998) seem to propose that a brand emerges when managers augment products and services with values. According to Holt (2004), a brand emerges when a stories that authors like media, companies and people tell start to be treated as truths. Traditional definitions (de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998) seem to propose that the value of brands resides in abstract values. The value of cultural brands according to Holt (2004) exists in the details of a brand's cultural expression.

Holt (2004) claims that traditional models assume that communications are used to change consumer perceptions of products and services by persuasion and discarded once the persuasion has been achieved. In cultural branding communications are the center of customer value and products and services act only as conduits by using of which consumers do a ritual action of experiencing the brands myth (Holt 2004).

Based on de Chernatony's and Dall'Olmo Riley's (1998) review, traditional definitions seem to propose that brands create value to customers by for instance matching with customer values, with a relationship, by being fashionable, cool or by simplifying decisions or reducing risk. According to Holt (2004) the value of cultural brands to customer comes from the brand buttressing their identity (Holt 2004).

The emphasis on the traditional definitions (de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998) seems to be on the one to one connection between a customer and a brand. Holt (2004) argues that practitioners of traditional definitions stretch the brand promises to meet needs of wider audiences. Holt (2004) claims that consumers of iconic brands never have one to one connection with a brand but they connect with a brand through a social network. According to him the most effective way to expand a cultural brand's market power is to target the most active followers of the brands.

Traditional definitions (de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998) seem to propose that the development of brands should be guided by consumer research, trends and brand identity. According to Holt (2004), instead of benefits of the category to individual customers, companies should gather understanding of holistic cultural needs of masses beyond category benefits in order to build a cultural brand. Holt (2004) argues that brands should instead of trends, follow subcultures, media, and focus on understanding brands' political and cultural authority.

The traditional definitions, according to Holt (2004), propose that the role of a customer is to perceive associations, build relationships and spread the brand by word of mouth (Holt, 2004). In cultural branding (2004), the role of a customer is to personalize the brands myth to fit their individual biography and to do the ritual action of experiencing the myth when using products and services. According to Holt (2016), traditional brands have acted as mediators in the consumer's interaction with their interests. In cultural branding (2016), the brands engage in cultural discourse as proselytizers for customer values.

According to Holt (2004), traditional definitions can be useful for low-involvement brands like deodorant brands as they simplify decision making for the consumer by distilling the product to a few key benefits. According to him relationship strategies on the other hand suit services, retailers and specialty goods.

Cultural branding applies particularly to categories in which people tend to value products as a means of self-expression but also other entities that people rely upon to express their identity (Holt, 2004). Holt (2004) argues that lessons from cultural branding may be applied to any market offering that people use regularly or idealize as a means to improve their lives. However, most brands require hybrid strategies (Holt, 2004).

The main contributions offered by the review are (1) a comparison of cultural branding against

traditional branding based on academic literature, (2) the discussion of how brands emerge and (3) how social networks function around brands according to cultural branding in comparison to traditional definitions of brand.

7.2 EXAMINATION OF THE METHODOLOGY

After the literature review the study continued by answering the first research question: What we can learn from (1) using a combination of Zaltman metaphor elicitation technique (ZMET) and Kelly's repertory grid technique to interview consumers, and (2) from using Barthes' ideas of meaning as a framework to analyze interviews to identify ideological opportunities for web design. The use and the results of using this methodology were examined with a test case of designing a brand concept and a website for USchool which is a minor masters program of Aalto University.

Holt (2004) argues that according to his research, conventional consumer methods do not result in such a holistic understanding of consumer needs beyond category benefits that is required to build iconic brands. The exemplified combination of methods and process seems to be a systematic way to understand cultural expressions of websites, how they contradict with consumers' identity projects, and towards what kind of ideologies consumers are gravitating as an alternative. Hence, despite Holt's argument, this goal seems to be reachable to some extent with the exemplified methodology.

ZMET enables to collect in-depth information of cultural, existential consumer needs beyond category benefits. Kelly's repertory grid technique enables to test how these needs are perceived to be fulfilled by, or contradicting with cultural expressions of websites. Barthes' ideas as an interview analysis framework enables to break down these abstract associations and thoughts into actionable information. With the framework it is possible to understand the distinction between the interviewees' intersubjective e.g. subculture specific mythologies and ideologies and the values, emotions and attitudes shared within a broader culture.

7.3 AIMS AND APPLICABILITY

As mentioned by Holt (2004) the tactics and strategy of cultural branding have been used by some design offices already decades ago. Also at the time of this thesis there most likely are huge differences in the understanding and practice of branding among the practitioners of branding. According to my personal knowledge branding has recently gained interest by some Finnish design studios as they have started to promote the application of branding into service and UX-design. As mentioned above, the processes and methods that are constantly developed among practitioners and the ideas of cultural branding have existed for in some places. Still, based on my research, there are only a few academic articles that discuss cultural branding, identifying cultural contradictions or emerging cultural needs for the purposes of branding. There are a few Master's theses done before this one which discuss the process of cultural branding in practice. However, the previous works, which focus on the execution of the strategy in practice discuss the process more holistically but in less depth than this thesis.

Holt's opinions of the functionality of the traditional definitions of brand can be perceived as quite strong. It is visible by de Chernatony's and Dall'Omo Riley's (1998) review that there are multiple understandings of the definition of brand and how brands function. Many of these definitions most likely serve some purpose well. According to Holt (2004) parts of cultural branding can be embedded to other strategies to build hybrid strategies. Lessons from cultural branding can be applied even for low involvement categories without much identity value (Holt 2004). The goal of this thesis is not to disregard all the other approaches to branding but to inspire academics and practitioners to apply, test and develop some parts of cultural branding. The hope is that this thesis inspires and enables to build meaningful brands and websites.

According to Garzotto et al. (2010), the web has become a mainstream communication tool used by companies, institutions, celebrities, and politicians to establish, reinforce, or repurpose their brand, almost bypassing more conventional branding media. Still, according to Islam (2013), the literature on the cultural meanings of semiotics of digital user interfaces is very limited. This thesis contributes to this lack with a case study on understanding the cultural and mythological meaning of websites.

8. CASE CONTINUATION

The further development of the brand concept and the website end result will be discussed briefly in this section.

After identifying the ideological opportunities I mapped which different variations of these ideologies had recently gained attention from consumers, and how these variations had been dramatized through different types of myths. To understand which myths and cultural codes were used to express these ideologies I collected screenshots of websites, which represented the ideology variations. As an example of variations, there are various types of myths related to academia. For example student activism and conservative ideologies both seem to be part of the academic ideological opportunity but are dramatized through totally different kinds of myths.



Figure 38: Screenshots of websites which represented different variations of cultural expressions related to each of the ideological opportunities.

After mapping the cultural expression variations I created a set of fake advertisement posters. Each of the posters focused on representing a myth related to one of the ideological opportunities. The posters combined cultural codes from various myths to have an original and appealing style and story combination.

The fake advertisement posters were tested with five persons. The fake advertisements were intended to present a provocative, radical version of the ideology in order to result in distinctive reactions in the test participants. The test resulted in an understanding of what kind of ideologies and myths the selected cultural codes of the posters expressed and which of the ideologies were most appealing and relevant for the target group participants.

The final website combines the myths from the most liked fake advertisements. The aim was to convey a mixture of myths about critical activism, academia, empathy, social responsibility and maker movement. The myths are visible in the style and the content of the website. The final website can be visited at uschool.aalto.fi

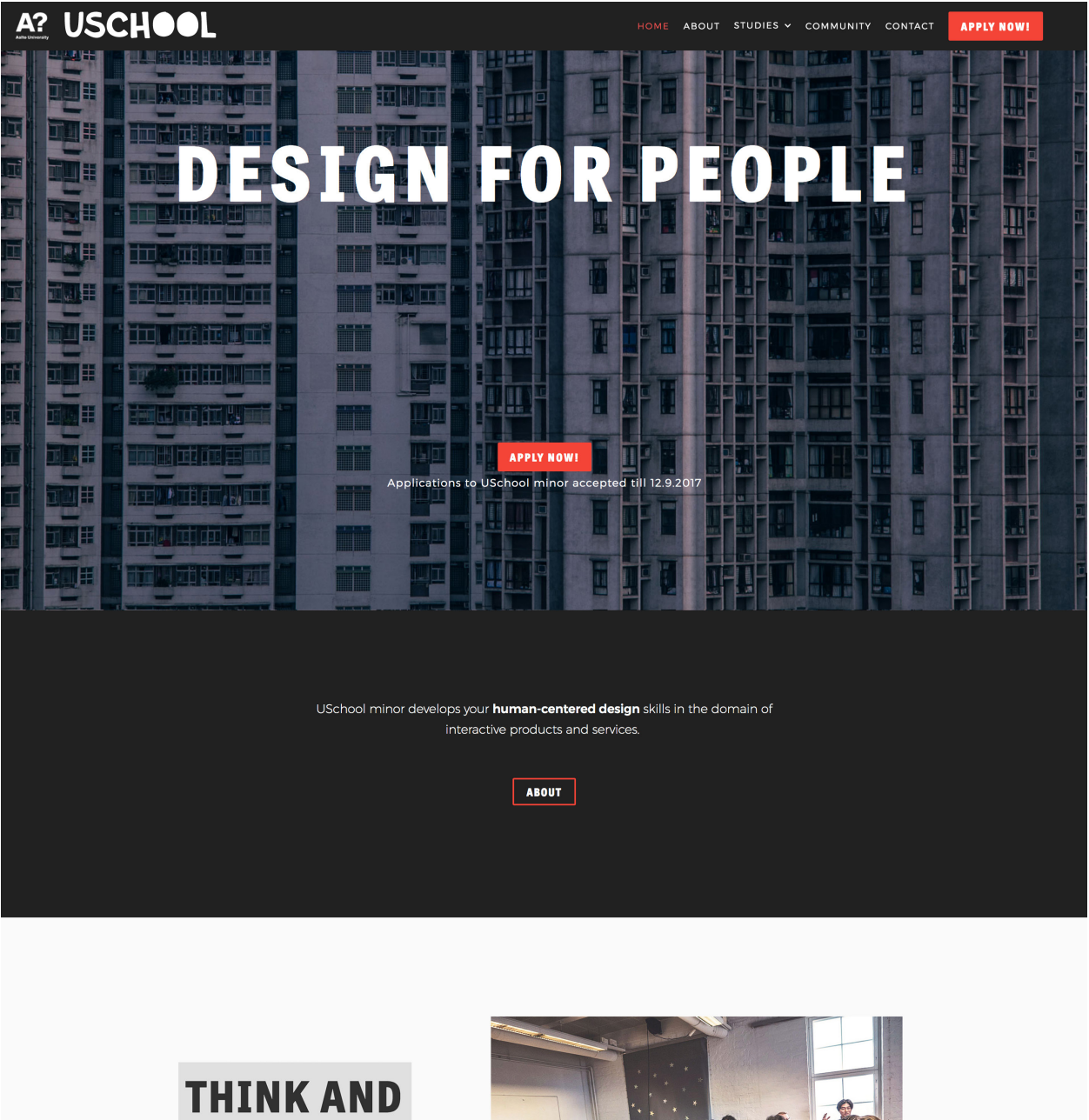


Figure 39: USchool website front page

THINK AND QUESTION

USchool courses provide you a multi-disciplinary perspective to see the role of interactive products and services in people's lives. Learning about human cognition, user interfaces, and user experience helps you to question and justify your decisions.



DO AND LEARN

You'll learn how to make interactive technology usable, pleasurable, and meaningful. Being able to answer to a real user's need is rewarding and motivating. On the courses we build, test and iterate to improve our designs to the limit.

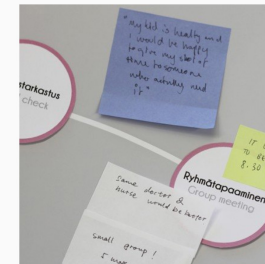


CARE AND ACT

We want to make a slightly prettier, easier, and friendlier world. No technology or design alone can solve the biggest and the most important problems of our world, but bad design can ruin a lot.

Figure 40: USchool website front page

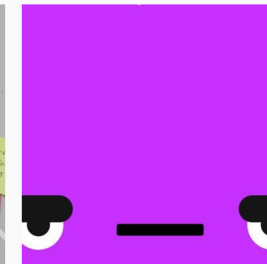
STUDENT PROJECTS



DESIGN GAME — ASKELEET

Askeleet is a design game for getting everyone around the same table to share their thoughts. The game is tailored to the development of a specific service, kindergarten health checks for three-year-olds.

DESIGN FOR SERVICES COURSE



WI-FI SECURITY APPLICATION

'Connector' is an application that enables an easy and fast way to connect to the most secure Wi-Fi available and to compare different networks on a list or map view.

EXPERIENCE DRIVEN DESIGN COURSE



UUTISKYLPY

During the Design Project course, we created Uutiskylpy: a mobile app for refugees in Finland that teaches the Finnish language by using YLE's Selkoutiset (simple language news).

DESIGN PROJECT COURSE

You can choose the minor studies from a large selection of courses and thus influence a lot your USchool learning takeaways.

COURSES

Figure 41: USchool website front page

USchool will give you an excellent skillset and mindset needed to start your career as **an advocate for human-centered design**, no matter if your place is in an NGO, start-up, tech business or UX consultancy.

COMMUNITY



JOIN US!

One thing is sure, though. In USchool, you'll be part of a community of different minds with whom **you'll learn how to question, justify, design, build, care and act for more humane design**, technology now and in the future.

APPLY NOW!

Figure 42: USchool website front page

A? USCHOOL

HOME ABOUT STUDIES COMMUNITY CONTACT

APPLY NOW!

THINK, DO AND ACT

We are a community of different minds who think, question, design, build, care, and act for more humane interactive technology.

THE USCHOOL WAY

WE CARE AND EMPATHIZE

Figure 42: USchool website about page

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